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BY

REV. HENRY T. SELL, D.D.

*Author of "Supplemental Bible Studies," "Bible Study by Books," "Bible
Study by Doctrines," "Bible Studies in the Life of Christ,"
"Bible Studies in the Life of Paul," and "Studies
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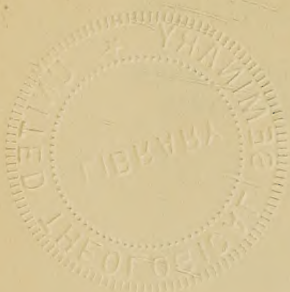
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INTRODUCTORY

While the Bible is composed of many books, and each one has a plan and purpose peculiar to itself, yet there is a general plan and purpose in the Bible to which the books are subordinate and of which they form parts. It is with the design of making plain this general plan and its divisions, that this series of studies is written. There has been much study of the Scriptures by texts, by subjects and by books; it may be well now to consider them as a whole. No one can read the narrative from Genesis to Revelation without recognizing that it is something more than mere history; it shows how the divine Religion was given to man, and the progressiveness of that Revelation. As history "it differs from ordinary history in the subject, because it is the history of the discipline and training of God's chosen people; in its method, because it is the history of facts as God sees them referred to their true center in Him."

The course of events is taken up as it is presented in the English Bible. No attempt has been made to argue upon disputed questions, but there has been an earnest endeavor to make plain the great epochs; their meaning; how and why they follow each other; and their purpose. Special attention has been given to illustrations and allusions from the history of other

nations or what may be called the political, social and religious environment of God's chosen people in Old and New Testament times. In so small a work on so great a subject much that the author would gladly have said in further elucidation of his theme had necessarily to be omitted.

The purpose is to carry the student through the Bible in twenty-four studies and give him a general view of what he may have been studying in detail in many other books. The author is deeply grateful for the favor with which his former books, *Supplemental Bible Studies*, *Bible Study by Books*, and *Bible by Study by Doctrines*, have been received.

BIBLE HISTORY IS HERE DIVIDED INTO SIX PERIODS

There are four studies or lessons under each division.

FIRST PERIOD, IN THE BEGINNING

We have here plainly and simply set forth what the Bible has to tell us about the beginning of the world, man, sin and redemption.

The Chapters are: The Creation, The Garden of Eden, The Flood, The Ancient World.

SECOND PERIOD, THE THEOCRACY

• Theocracy means the rule of God in contradistinction to monarchy, democracy, aristocracy, etc. It was first applied by Josephus to designate the peculiar state organization of the Jews. As the Mosaic law was at once the direct expression of the will of

God and the civil law of the people, God was indeed the ruler of the Jewish state.

The Chapters are: Abraham and the Chosen People, Moses and the Exodus, Joshua and the Conquest, The Judges of Israel.

THIRD PERIOD, THE KINGDOM

The Theocracy passed into the kingdom; it was a declension from the Theocracy yet it was made by God to serve His purpose. The thought of the people in asking for a king was to be like the nations round about them; the principle set forth by God in giving a king was to have a monarch who would rule not by the will of the people or his own will but by the will of God; hence we see the ill success of the kings who tried to rule by their own wills and the good success of those who served God. This was a peculiar people raised up for a particular purpose. "The Kingdom of God in Israel was typical of the Kingdom of God afterwards to be established in the world, and the King of Israel was typical of Christ, the King of the Universal Kingdom."

The Chapters are: The Rise of the Kingdom, The Glory of the Kingdom, The Division and Fall of the Kingdom, Prophets of the Kingdom.

FOURTH PERIOD, THE EXILE AND RETURN

The Kingdom after coming to great power and glory was divided into two parts: Israel and Judah; these were overthrown and we now come to the Captivity and Restoration. The Kingdom really passed

into the Jewish Church, which this epoch represents; this "took the place of the Kingdom and resumed the ideal of the Theocracy. When the discipline of the Captivity had done its work the unity of the church succeeded to the unity of the nation."

The Chapters are: The Captivity, The Return from Exile, Prophets of the Exile and Return, Malachi to Christ.

FIFTH PERIOD, CHRIST ON EARTH

The Messiah, so long proclaimed, appears at last in earthly form and accomplishes His marvelous work. The mission of the Jewish Nation and Church finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

The Chapters are: Advent of the Messiah, Life of Christ on Earth, The Resurrection and Ascension, Supremacy of Christ.

SIXTH PERIOD, THE FIRST CHURCHES

The Believers in Christ after the Day of Pentecost began to be gathered into churches. In this section we see the organization, the difficulties and the successes of the infant churches.

The Chapters are: The Churches in the Acts, The Epistles of Paul, The General Epistles, The Message of John to the Churches.

There is great need to-day that the Bible be studied in its entirety; this will correct many misapprehensions and much false teaching; it will give a view of God's plan as it is revealed not in a part or parts but in the whole Bible; it will strengthen faith

and it will be seen that the foundations stand sure. The French Protestant Church had for its motto an anvil around which were lying many broken hammers with this inscription underneath: "Hammer away, ye hostile bands; your hammers break, God's anvil stands." There is no fear but what the Bible will outlast its enemies; the only fear is that we shall **not** study and understand it.

PERIOD I
IN THE BEGINNING
CHAPTERS

- I. CREATION
- II. THE GARDEN OF EDEN
- III. THE FLOOD
- IV. THE ANCIENT WORLD

I

CREATION

Scripture: Genesis 1: 1-31

THE CREATION ACCOUNT

We judge every writing by the object which the writer has in view.

The questions will arise: What connection has the world with God? What is the beginning of life? What is the commencement of the history of the earth and man? What has the history of Israel to do with these origins? To these questions Genesis professes to give intelligent answers, and to show the relation of the world to God and man. We find here a revelation showing us "the origin, apostasy and development of the human race as connected with the plan of redemption."

a. *This account is an introduction* to the "history of the Revelation of God" and the Salvation of man; it was necessary to show the relation in which God stood to the world and to man,

b. *The narrative is very brief.* According to the scientists we have the record of millions of years compressed into thirty-one verses.

c. *It is sketched in grand outlines.* Details, exceptions and modifications are omitted.

d. *It is told in popular language.* Things are presented as they appear: technical terms and scientific language are not used. Even if we were told exactly how things happened in exact language we would not be able to fully understand them, for the act of creation is so great that it can never be fully comprehended by the finite mind; in this lies the chief difficulty in understanding or explaining it. It was necessary to use such language that men of all ages, all classes, all climes might have some idea of the great truths which were set forth in the narrative. Prof. Driver says that we have here a set of "Representative Pictures" which reveal to our minds what really took place far better than whole books of explanations.

e. *How this record came into existence* we do not know. The art of writing was known and practiced long before the time of Abraham. The only reasonable explanation is that God imparted it by His revelation of Himself. Abraham may have brought this record with him from the land of Chaldea.

f. *There is a decided difference from all other cosmogonies* or similar accounts. The fact of a creator who is before all and the maker of all is the fundamental teaching of Genesis. "The conceptions of God in the cosmogonies of other peoples of the ancient world were pagan and polytheistic." For instance: the Babylonian scheme of creation is entirely polytheistic, chaos is before the gods, as the earth gradually assumes form they emerge from the surging deep, they did not create but were a part of the creation. In the same way the ancient Greek gods

were not creators but all were created, "had a beginning, were to have an end, stood within the order of nature and under the shadow of fate."

g. *The aim of the book of Genesis must be kept in mind* in studying this creation account of which it is but one chapter out of fifty. The design of the whole book is to show the beginning of the plan of Redemption. God is creator of all, the maker of man, of all men. Man sins and the work of salvation begins. The first eleven chapters are occupied with the early history of mankind and the failure to serve God. The last thirty-nine chapters recount the covenant with Abraham, who is chosen by God to be the recipient of the promises, and the beginning of a race and people out of which was to come the Messiah to bless the whole world.

The motive is essentially religious; to miss this is to lose the significance of everything here set down.

RELATION OF GOD TO THE WORLD

a. *The world is not self-originated.* The first verses of Genesis teach us that God is a Spiritual Being, prior to the world and independent of it; that the world arrived at the form in which we know it by a series of stages, each the embodiment of a Divine purpose and the whole the realization of a Divine plan. He is everywhere recognized in the Bible as the creator of the universe and distinct from it.

b. "*God is the cause of the being or existence of the universe* and not merely of its arrangement or evolution. Creation is the act of God alone, it is a power

differing not only in degree but in kind from all power of finite beings."

c. *In creating and preserving the universe*, we have a free act of God's will. He does not add to His power by the act of creating, He only reveals it by "realizing His thought in a finite form."

d. *The fact that God created the universe is not incompatible* with the theory of Evolution or any process of arrangement. Evolution does not disprove creation, as some falsely claim. Evolution gives no explanation of the origin of the homogeneous stuff itself nor of the beginning or motion of it. It leaves the necessity for a creation as imperative as it was before, and without God immanent in it Evolution cannot account for its own continuance and "for the higher order of beings which at successive epochs appear in the universe." Successive stages of creation and secondary causes are recognized in this first chapter of Genesis. Even under the theory of Evolution we have still the questions: "Who created the germ? If man cannot create an oak, can he create an acorn?" There is a progression or progressive evolution from the simple to the more complex forms of life; from the lower to the higher types. The whole universe was not created by one fiat of the Divine will.

e. *Every stage of the work of creation was dependent upon the will of God and carried out His purpose.*

f. *There is in this creation account a revelation of great truths and realities which reason cannot*

give us. We are here shown the right attitude of the earth (the mineral, the vegetable and the animal kingdoms) to God. He is the creator and preserver. It is important to remember that no "changes in our knowledge of physical truth can at all affect the teaching of this chapter." Things have not just grown of themselves but have been called into existence by a presiding intelligence and originating will. "No attempt to account for the existence of the world in any other way has been successful. Behind all there is a living, conscious spirit who wills, knows and fashions all things. In this belief the whole world is changed to us. We no longer live in a world of blind, unreasoning forces, but in a world controlled by a loving Father. This loving Father is revealed in the person of His Son, who is the express image of His person. We see what God is like in the image of His Son."

RELATION OF GOD TO MAN

a. *The making of man.* He was brought up out of the dust, he did not descend from heaven neither was he made out of nothing by the Divine power, he is part of the physical universe, he is dependent upon it for his support and bound up with its fortunes, he is subject to the action of its laws. This is the physical side of man.

b. *The twofold nature of man.* Man has a spiritual as well as a material nature. "The animals were formed in large and indiscriminate masses. Man was formed as an individual with direct personal relations with the Creator." "There is in man a spir-

itual element in which the brute has no share, his power of infinite progress, his thoughts and desires that look onward even beyond time, his recognition of the spiritual existence and of a divinity above all, evince a nature that partakes of the infinite and divine." (Prof. Dana.) "Let it be admitted," says Prof. Driver, "that the physical causes explain in the individual the growth of his bodily frame, they throw no light on the origin of the soul."

c. *The pre-eminence of man.* He is different from all else in the universe, he was made in the image of God and he is akin to Him. "The essential elements of personality are the same in man and God." It is to him alone that God can manifest Himself. Man is the chief work of God and the crown of this world; to him was given dominion over all else. This is the spiritual side of man.

GENESIS AND SCIENCE

a. *Genesis* declares the absolute supremacy of the Deity, His power to mould and dispose all things to His own purpose, the perfect realization of His design marking the entire work and noted by the recurring formula, "and God said that it was good."

b. *Science* cannot affect or disprove the facts noted above. Science discloses merely the mechanical and physical processes of which the course of nature consists and is supplementary and not antagonistic. Science affirms nothing, can affirm nothing of the first great cause.

. Prof. Haeckel of Jena declares that "two great and

fundamental ideas common also to the non-miraculous theory of creation meet us in this Mosaic hypothesis of creation with surprising clearness and simplicity—the idea of separation and differentiation and the idea of progressive development or perfecting.”

It is, however, an impossible task to fully reconcile this Genesis creation account with the theories of science, for several reasons—our knowledge of the matter is imperfect; scientists do not agree among themselves; science is continually shifting its grounds and the theories of one generation of scientific men are rejected by the next as false and misleading. “The Theism cradled in the first chapters of Genesis in its life and growth has survived multitudes of perishing forms of science.”

GREAT TRUTHS TAUGHT

1. *A Spiritual Being is Lord and Creator of all.* The universe was called into existence by and is dependent on His will.

2. *Every stage of the work of creation* in its development is penetrated by Divine qualities, shows the power of God and carries out His purpose. This is asserted both in general and detail in the creation account.

3. *The Unity of God.* It is one God, and not many gods, who does all that is done.

In an age when the nations worshiped many gods, the fruitfulness of the earth, the sun, moon and stars, the powers of nature, and beasts of the field, it is remarkable that we should have such clear cut and

pointed statements in regard to the Spirituality, the Supremacy and Unity of God. In no way is the inspiration of the writer better established than in the setting forth of these great truths. It was God who made the earth, the stars, the sea, the trees, all flying and creeping things; the catalogue is an exhaustive one. Why worship the sacred cats and bulls of Egypt, or stones or trees from which the idols of Assyria and Babylonia were fashioned, when they are simply a part of the created Universe? The writer was far more anxious to set forth great spiritual truths than he was to write an account that should be an exact physical explanation of how the earth was made.

QUESTIONS

How must we judge the creation account? What can be said of it as an introduction to the history of revelation; its brevity; grand outlines? How is it told? How did it come into existence? How does it differ from all other cosmogonies? What is its aim? What is the relation of God to the world? Is the world self-originated? Is it a free act of God? Is creation incompatible with Evolution? What is the relation of God to man? What can be said of the making of man; his twofold nature; his pre-eminence? What can be said of Genesis and science? Points of agreement? What are the great truths taught in the Genesis account?

II

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Scripture: Genesis 2: 1-5: 32

THE MEANING OF THIS NARRATIVE

The interest in this story does not center in the discussion of the place where the Garden of Eden was situated or the state of the first man from a scientific point of view, but in the first probation, temptation, fall, and promise of redemption.

We ask the questions: How did sin begin? How did salvation begin? Is God the author of sin? Can man redeem himself? How can God save man? These questions are at the root of all religions. The world has gone wrong, men feel that they are sinners. The story of Adam's sin is substantially the account of every sinful man.

ADAM AND EVE

Man was made before the Garden of Eden was planted (Gen. 2: 7, 8) and he was placed in the garden in a condition of innocence; he was expelled; the Genesis story shows us why and how he was driven out of that happy place.

a. *The state of innocence.* It is surprising how simple and plain the Bible language is in regard to

the earliest condition of man. He lived on fruit, he went unclothed and unhoused. There is no record that he had a knowledge of the arts. But Adam did not live in idleness: he was to dress and keep the Garden (Gen. 2:15), an occupation which must have kept him comparatively busy. He had intelligence and capacity for speech, for he understood the characteristics of the animals which were brought to him and gave them their names. Gen. 2:19, 20. God gave to Adam the companionship of Eve, and Himself was in immediate communication with him. What would have been the result if man had continued in this first state it is useless to speculate.

The ancient heathen nations all held a belief in a Golden Age in the past, followed by a gradual descent to the want and wretchedness of the present state, but this tradition differs from the Bible account in that it was a time of absolute idleness, with "an untilled soil producing heavy crops and rivers flowing now with milk and now with nectar and the yellow honey dripping from the green oak."

b. *The temptation.* Man was to be brought out of a simple and childlike innocence, he was to develop character; he must choose for himself even to the risking the loss of everything materially good. Adam was asked to obey a reasonable and righteous command of God. He was to be tried and tested as every man is who comes into this world.

It is a significant fact that the temptation came from *without*, since it could not well originate in an innocent being. The first man was tempted to an

"*upward fall*;" as men now "lie to succeed and drink to be happy," so Adam desired the fruit of the forbidden tree that he might be wise and be as God.

Temptation came in the form of a serpent; the serpent goes everywhere, it comes when we do not expect it. It is said to fascinate its victim, and once really enfolded in its coils resistance is almost useless. Satan is described in Rev. 12:9 and 20:2 as a serpent.

Adam's curiosity was aroused, he wanted to know the qualities of this wonderful fruit which had been forbidden to him; secondly, he doubted God's goodness, he thought God was keeping something good from him. Then came the tasting, and the mischief was done.

NOTE—Kalisch says, agreeing with Lenormant, that almost throughout the East the serpent was used as an emblem of the evil principle.

c. *The fall.* It is a fact that the human race is in a state of sin and suffering and has been through all recorded history. We see the effects of disobedience to God's laws everywhere. Every evil condition has its origin in sin; and what has its inlet through human sin must have its outlet through human misery. The reason of Adam's fall is the reason of the downfall of every man who sins: he sought to set up a standard of what was good and right instead of taking God's word for his rule of action.

d. *The punishment.* Loss of innocence; a sense of shame; expulsion from the garden. The cursing of

the woman, the man and the ground. Gen. 3:9-24.

"The Punishment," Prof. Ryle remarks, "was not vindictive but disciplinary. The infliction of earthly suffering is declared to be the constant witness of Divine displeasure towards sin."

e. *The promise.* In the very cursing of man there is a promise of blessing, and more than the hint of a Redeemer in Gen. 3:15. The tempter's head shall be bruised by the seed of the woman; there is here a golden gleam of the kingdom of Christ in which man through a Divine Savior shall find expiation for his sin. Again, in Gen. 3:22, where man is debarred from the tree of life, we find a merciful provision even in death, in that it prevents man from becoming immortal in his sin: there is a gateway through death to a Paradise on high. The sting of death is sin, not suffering.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Location of Eden. The Garden and Eden are not synonymous terms. Eden was or might have been a wide region; the Garden was situated in the eastern part or in that direction from the writer (Gen. 2:8).

It seems evident from the description that the writer intended to describe a real place.

Eighty hypotheses have been advanced in regard to the site of the Garden; the most reasonable of these are two: one of which locates the whole region of Eden below the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and the other in the high table-lands of

Armenia. Both these regions satisfy the conditions. One main branch of the Tigris river rises within about two miles of the Euphrates. The supposed northern site of Eden is thus described by the British engineer Colonel Chesney: "It is adapted for every tree that is pleasant and good for food, there are fertile plains overspread with groves, orchards, vineyards, gardens and villages." The southern site is equally blessed and has been from remote ages the seat of population and power.

The word "Ethopia," Gen. 2:13, is "Cush" (see Revised Bible) in the Hebrew, and refers to either of the two sites mentioned above. See Gen. 10:7-10.

FROM ADAM TO NOAH

a. *Cain and Abel.* In Gen. 3, we have the birth of sin and its first fateful consequences. In Gen. 4, "we have an account of its development and the first outspreading of the human race. Cain and Abel are respectively types of the two opposing principles discernible throughout the sacred history: Cain of the unchecked dominion of evil, Abel of the victory of faith."

Although Cain was punished for the killing of Abel, he was given an opportunity to redeem himself. Gen. 4:15.

In this chapter we have noted steps of progress in the arts and civilization (Gen. 4:19-24), the weaving of cloth for tents, the invention of wind and string instruments, and the working of metals. So far as Archaeology has anything to say on this subject

"the art of weaving antedates all historic knowledge." It has been widely proclaimed that the Bible was wrong in asserting the early knowledge of the arts and the working of metals, but recent excavations abundantly prove its truth.

b. *The line of Seth.* In Gen. 5, we have a new beginning in Seth to show the chosen man through whom there was to be a new development of spiritual life. Adam had sinned; Cain proved unfit; Abel was killed; and now Seth is selected to bear the promises and hold communion with God for the religious uplifting of the race. But this holy generation of Seth is corrupted by intermarriage with the descendants of Cain, and then comes an era of great wickedness in which Noah is chosen and a flood destroys the evil generation.

It is plainly shown that though great advancement has been made in the arts and civilization that only righteousness can preserve and exalt man.

c. *The great ages of the Antediluvians.* The Hebrew text, if we read it aright, gives the total years of Adam as 930, Seth 912, Methuselah 969, etc. These long periods have been called "Cyclical periods"; they are said to indicate the ascendancy of a family or "epochs of antediluvian history."

Those who accept the account as it reads, as many scholars do, make the following points: (1) The great oriental student Lenormant asserts that all ancient nations believed in the extreme longevity of their earliest ancestors. He refers to the well-known statement of Josephus that Hesiod, Hecataeus,

Hellanicos, Acousilaos and others relate that men of antiquity lived a thousand years. (2) For us to say what was possible or impossible to human life in the beginning is absurd. We cannot argue from the length of life as we see it now. We are accustomed to trees attaining their growth, decaying and dying within a century, yet Prof. Asa Gray declares that the Sequia of California has attained an age of more than 2000 years. Sir John Lubbock, the eminent scientist, states that even now many animals attain a great age; the camel 100 years, the elephant 150 or more, the Greenland whale a possible 400, a tortoise is said to have lived 500. (3) The human body in its primitive condition before it became the heir of the diseases, weaknesses and vices of a thousand or more generations of men might have been much more capable of resisting decay and death than it is now. Even in our own times there are well-attested cases of human lives extending well over the century mark and some near to the second century line.

d. *The Chronology from Adam to Noah.* This is one of the hard problems with which we have to deal. Some of the difficulty and discrepancy may be due to the fact that the ancient Hebrews designated numbers by letters of the alphabet and hence greatly increased the liability to error on the part of the copyists. Again, the key that unlocks the mystery has not yet been found.

The same trouble is had with all ancient history. The beginning of the Ancient Empire of Egypt is placed at 5004 B. C. by Marietta Bey, and at 2320

B. C. by Wilkinson, and at all dates between these extremes by eminent scholars; there is a difference of 2,684 years. In the case of one king in Babylonian history, that of Hammurabi, the best authorities differ some years in fixing the time of his reign. Yet the kings reigned and events took place in a certain and quite well-defined order.

It does not destroy or harm in any way the Bible history that we cannot as yet quite place some events chronologically. We need more light upon this whole subject. We know this, that the Scripture accounts are being marvelously confirmed by recent excavations and explorations in Bible lands.

QUESTIONS

What is the meaning of the narrative of the Garden of Eden? What can be said of the first state of man? What did the ancients believe about the Golden Age? What was the temptation; the fall; the punishment; the promise of future blessing? What can be said of the location of the Garden of Eden? What is the significance of the story of Cain and Abel? What can be said of the line of Seth? How are the great ages of the Antediluvians explained? Give an explanation of the problem of the chronology from Adam to Noah.

III

THE FLOOD

Scripture: Genesis 6: 1-9: 29

THE SCRIPTURE ACCOUNT

This is plain and straightforward. The story of the Deluge does not appear in this connection for its own sake or because it is interesting or startling; it is an incident in the history of Redemption which the Bible relates. It is here shown how evil had grown rampant, threatening wholly to destroy the good, and what means were taken to defeat this purpose and restore the supremacy of the good. Adam and Eve had yielded to an *outward* temptation, now the temptation was *within*. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. 6: 5. It looked as if righteousness had fled from the earth, for "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Gen. 6: 11.

a. *There was need of a separation* of the righteous from the wicked on account of the rank growth of evil.

b. *We have here one of the first steps* toward a

chosen nation that was to be set apart from all nations.

c. *The interest in the narrative*, then, is in righteous Noah and an unrighteous people: the punishment of wickedness and the triumph of the good.

The extent of the flood, the size of the ark, etc., are minor considerations in which the main question is bound up.

THE METHOD

a. *The charge*. In Genesis 6:1-13, we have a document which is very important: it is the formal indictment against a criminal people who would not heed threatenings or appeals but who would go their own cruel ways.

b. *The formal warning*. "Yet his (man's) days shall be an hundred and twenty years." Gen. 6:3. This sentence is taken by commentators to signify that God gave notice (if we may so speak) that at the end of that time His Spirit (see first clause Gen. 6:3) would cease to strive with man, and unless there was repentance and turning from evil deeds destruction would come.

c. *The chosen man*, Noah, for the escape of the righteous remnant. Gen. 6:13. "Noah, the son of Lamech (Gen. 5:28), was the tenth and the last in the list of the Sethic line." He was called Noah by his father, who said: "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." Gen. 5:29. "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations,

and Noah walked with God." Gen. 6:9. Compare 1 Peter 3:20 and Heb. 11:7.

We do not know that Noah preached to his generation, if he did it seems not to have been heeded; he was 480 years old when he was commanded to build the ark. With him there was to be a new beginning.

d. *The chosen means of escape* from the doom impending over the world was to be a great vessel which Noah was commanded to build. The ark is very briefly described in three verses. Gen. 6:14-16. It had three stories and (if we allow 21 inches to a cubit) was "525 ft. long, 87 ft. wide and 52 ft. high." "In 1609 the Mennonite, P. Jansen of Horn, Holland, built a vessel after the model of the ark and discovered that it would hold a third more freight than ships built in the usual way with the same number of cubic feet.

The building of this huge ship, about the size of the Great Eastern, must have been a great object lesson to an evil generation, which was heeded as little as God's warning. During the time of waiting, nearly a century and a quarter, Noah had opportunity to make this vessel strong and seaworthy.

e. *Judgment at last.* The ark was completed and God had shut Noah in. Gen. 7:16. Then came the end, the great rain and the breaking up of the fountains of the deep. Gen. 7:17-24. The boasting of the wicked had come to naught. They who had defied and sneered at God and His precepts were overwhelmed in their sins. Tears, entreaties, curses, physical strength, mental culture, mechanical skill, all

availed nothing against this awful overwhelming flood that men had brought upon themselves for their evil deeds.

f. *Salvation for the righteous remnant.* Noah and his family were preserved to begin anew the human family on a new basis. A covenant was made with Noah and his seed after him. Gen. 9:8-17.

g. *We have shown to us in this lesson a step in God's moral government of the world.* A great object lesson, that evil, though it seems to triumph and carry all before it, yet in the end shall be cut off and all who embrace it miserably perish.

SIDE LIGHTS AND CONFIRMATIONS

There are a score or more of interesting Historical, Geographical and Geological questions involved in this narrative; many of them have been settled again and again only to be unsettled by further discoveries, and again to go through the same process. One beauty of the Bible narratives is that there is always something new and fresh about them; they are in this respect like the problems of nature. There is space to notice only a few of the more prominent confirmations of the story.

a. *The tradition of a Deluge is widespread.* The great oriental scholar Lenormant says, "Among all the traditions which concern the history of primitive humanity, the most universal is that of the flood." This tradition is found amongst savage and civilized races alike; in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia,

North and South America and the islands of the sea.

These traditions agree, "with more or less expansion or omission," in several important particulars.

(1) An evil world destroyed for its wickedness. (2) One righteous family saved in an ark or boat together with animals. (3) The vessel landing on a mountain. (4) A bird sent out. (5) An altar built and sacrifices offered. The details usually have a local coloring, but in the great, broad, main facts they are substantially at one.

This seems to show the truth of the flood and that all peoples once had a common home from which they have been scattered over the face of the earth.

b. *Extent of the Deluge.* "Thoughtful men of all shades of opinion have come to the conclusion that the Noachian deluge was a local one, though sufficiently extensive in its area to destroy all the then existing races of men." Delitzsch says, "The Scripture demands the universality of the flood only for the earth as inhabited, not for the earth as such."

This is the view now adopted by the commentators of the various evangelical communions. If at the time of the flood the race was dwelling near the place of its origin and not yet dispersed abroad, this flood would not have had to be very extensive.

c. *Geological testimony.* The deluge is "entirely within the range of natural phenomena." Gen. 7:11 speaks of the fountains of the great deep being broken up, besides the windows of heaven being opened. This language may refer to the inrushing of the sea

upon a depression of the land which was re-elevated. Geologists are perfectly well acquainted with the phenomena of both sudden and gradual depressions of small and large land areas. For instance: the coast of Greenland for six hundred miles has been sinking for four hundred years; the coast of Chili was elevated for a long distance by the earthquake of 1822. Again, the level of the Black Sea is eighty-three feet above the shore line of the Caspian.

One writer says: "Suppose a depression, such as those actually recorded elsewhere, to have taken place for forty days, from the Euxine Sea and Persian Gulf on the one hand, and the Gulf of Finland on the other; this breaking up of the fountains of the great deep would slowly and surely have submerged that whole region of perhaps two thousand miles each way, sinking it far enough at the center to cover all the hills of the district under the whole heaven. Add the supposition that after a certain time the depressed hollow began to rise until it resumed its former level and we have all the phenomena of the case."

Another writer declares for a tidal wave.

A number of geologists claim that at the close of the mammoth period a great catastrophe took place by which animal life was destroyed over a great part of the earth's surface; this involved a widespread flood of water.

TEACHINGS OF THE DELUGE

a. *About God.* (1) He is moved and acts from

moral considerations. Man acts from his commercial, social, political or family relations and often the moral aspect is the last to have weight, while with God the latter is the main thing. God does not save for numbers or art or civilization but for moral character and obedience to His laws. The antediluvians were an evil although a strong, pushing race, acquainted with the arts and probably advanced in civilization, yet they all perished except righteous Noah.

(2) God does not act hastily. He gave warning to the antediluvians one hundred and twenty years in advance of His judgment. Gen. 6:3.

(3) God does not act in anger, Gen. 6:6. He was grieved at heart.

b. *About man.* The power he has to call down destruction upon himself.

c. *The nature of sin.* A great experiment had been tried. It would seem that if you could gather all the evil people together, the thief, the gambler, the drunkard maker, the murderer, and put them out of the world, leaving only the righteous men, that then the world would be better at once. That plan has been tried in the Deluge. You cannot burn sin out, or drown it out, or crush it out, or educate it out. You must go deeper. We have here an object lesson of the effort to drown sin out, and the result.

d. *This flood* is a type of the final judgment.

e. *Noah is the first just man* in the Bible who saves others from destruction; hence he is a type of Him who saves the soul from destruction.

BIBLE STUDY BY PERIODS

QUESTIONS

What is the Scripture reason for the narrative of the flood? The method; the charge; the warning; the chosen man; the chosen means of escape; the judgment; the salvation of the righteous remnant? What can be said of Side Lights and Confirmations; the universality of the tradition of a deluge; extent; geological testimony? Teachings of the deluge; about God; man; nature of sin; types?

IV

THE ANCIENT WORLD

Scripture: Genesis 10: 1-11: 32

THE TABLE OF NATIONS AND TOWER OF BABEL

a. *The table of nations* (Gen. 10) is important not only as showing the "generations of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth" and the primary distribution of the race, but the unity, the brotherhood and the family relationship of man.

1. Its Scope. "It presents ethnological groups of peoples, traced to their ancestry or their early home, and relates to their primary distribution from one common center, the Land of Shinar. It follows them in that dispersion to different stages. . . . It has nothing to do with their subsequent migrations, changes or interchanges. The Japhethites are dismissed mainly along two lines: one southwest along the Mediterranean, the other northwest beyond the Black Sea. The Hamitic tribes are traced to the region of the Euphrates, Arabia, Egypt and Ethiopia, as well as Phenicia. The Semitic races are located, generally speaking, between these northern and southern peoples."

2. Historical Value. Bunsen and Knobel have pronounced it a "historic document" and the peoples

mentioned historical. Dillman, writing in 1892, confirmed this view. Delitzsch declares in the last edition of his Commentary: "Nowhere is found a survey of nations that can be compared with the ethnological table of the Bible." We have in this table the central and continuous thread of ancient history so far as its range extends. Modern discoverers in this line use this tenth chapter of Genesis as the standard to bring the results of their researches into coherence and unity. Rawlinson in his origin of nations says that "this record, rightly interpreted, completely harmonizes with the science of ethnology and anticipates many of the most curious and remarkable discoveries made in comparatively recent times." Some difficulties arise on account of the antiquity of the narrative: no other consecutive history extends half-way towards its starting-point."

3. Difference from all other tables. Amongst the Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, we have lists of other nations, but with this radical difference, that they (the other nations) are set down as conquered, enslaved or barbaric peoples; never once do we have the essential unity of all nations brought out, the brotherhood and family relationship of the race.

In this tenth chapter of Genesis, the Bible view is that of the essential unity of all peoples and the narrative deals with the ancestors of all nations on a perfect equality before it proceeds to deal with the history of a particular people chosen of God for a special object. This thought is carried out by the prophets in the looking forward to the uniting of all

peoples in the kingdom of God. Christ is the Savior and Judge of all men.

4. "The purpose of this is characteristic, namely, to make known what position Israel takes in the whole circle of nations." (Dillman.) It is, first, one of the brotherhood of nations; then it is selected for a particular task to bear a special part in the history of Redemption.

b. *Tower of Babel*. "As the author in Genesis 2 ff. explains the origin of sin and evil in the world, so here (ch. 11) he explains the divisions of languages and peoples, showing their fundamental reason and inner-significance." (Dillman's Commentary on Genesis, Vol. 1, p. 386.) Josephus declares the object of the building of this tower was to preserve the people in case of another flood. The narrative seems to imply that in some way the people were at cross purposes with God. The result was the confusion of tongues and the dispersion abroad. The bond by which the people sought to be brought together was not a holy one. The difference in languages tends to separate peoples in more ways than one and to check progress in civilization, commerce and arts. But if men were determined, as some are now, to use learning and civilization for evil purposes, the difference in languages and dispersion abroad would act as a salutary check to such evil tendencies. "The twofold idea that the separation of peoples and languages is an evil and a Divine punishment, and yet that it is a wholesome check on the further development of their sinful presumption, appears clearly from the narra

tive." "We see here the powerful development of the evil tendency in man, and his trend toward self-glorification. But for its full understanding it should be added that the prophets make it the goal of the future that the peoples will yet find their bond of unity in faith in the God of Salvation and in obedience to His will, and will learn to understand and speak the language of Israel." Is. 2:2-4; 19:18.

THE CONDITION OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

The Bible speaks of a comparatively high state of civilization in very early times. Gen. 4:20-22. In the ages before Abraham and Moses the world had proceeded very far on in culture, commerce, law and religion. All this has been denied until lately, when the evidence from research and excavation in ancient lands and buried cities, has shown the Bible to be correct in its statements.

a. *The commercial interests.*

(1) On land, between Egypt and Babylon through Palestine or Canaan (long before Moses' time) a regular stream of caravans was constantly on the road, except in time of war. Treaties were made between the different states whereby they, the caravans, were protected; if disturbed or molested by robbers the value of things stolen must be paid for by the country in whose territory the outrage was committed.

(2) On sea. The Phenicians (a colony from Babylon) began trade more than 3000 B. C., and sent out ships from Tyre which not only had intercourse with the coasts and settlements of the Mediterranean,

but later on went to England, circumnavigated Africa and traded in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. (McCurdy's History, Prophecy and the Monuments, Vol. 1, Appendix, Note 3.) Egypt sent sea expeditions to South Africa in the 16th century B. C. "Care must be taken," said a certain writer, "not to impute to the ancients our knowledge of geography," but the truth is, that the ancients knew a good deal more about geography than we supposed they did.

b. *Literary culture.* The times of Abraham (and even before) and later on to Moses were ages of high literary culture. Letters were constantly passing to and fro between the cities of the different kingdoms. There were schools, colleges, dictionaries, and many books written upon various subjects.

(1) The system of writing employed was one of the most complicated possible, demanding a good memory and years of study. Large libraries were gathered, not only in the Royal cities, but in the smaller towns. A library of thirty thousand inscribed tablets was found not so very long ago in the city of Tello in Babylonia.

(2) There was one literary language almost universally employed: the Babylonian. A letter sent anywhere in Egypt, Babylon, Canaan or Arabia could be read by the scribes without any difficulty. This fact of a universal literary language makes the decipherment of the monuments comparatively easy.

(3) Antiquity of writing. It is the testimony of Egyptian and Babylonian scholars that however far back we may go we never find these nations begin-

ning to learn to write. (Budge, *Dwellers on the Nile*, p. 63; McCurdy's *History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, Vol. 1, pp. 176-189.)

c. *Civilization*. When and where did civilization begin? The answer is very simple: We do not know. The Bible gives no date for the dawn of creation or civilization. So far as India and China are concerned recent research has shown the falsity of their claims to any civilization that antedates the Christian era by but a few hundreds of years. When the Egyptians emerge into the light of history, their language is already in decay. In the older civilization of Babylon "We are faced with the strange but undeniable fact which we also find in studying the *oldest stone vases and cylinders* that Babylonian art, 'previous to 3000 B. C.,' shows a knowledge of human forms, an observation of the laws of art, and a neatness and fineness of execution far beyond the products of later times. The flower of Babylonian art is found at the beginning of Babylonian history." (H. V. Hilprecht, *Recent Research in Bible Lands*, pp. 88, 89.) "The earliest culture and civilization of Egypt to which the monuments bear witness was in fact already perfect. It comes before us fully grown. The organization of the country was complete; the arts were known and practiced. Egyptian civilization, so far as we know at present, has no beginning; the further back we go the more perfect and developed we find it to have been." (Prof. A. H. Sayce, "Research in Egypt." See pages 101, 102 *Recent Research in*

Bible Lands.) Prof. Flinders Petrie has shown that some of the inner "blocks used in the construction of the great Egyptian Pyramid of Gizeh were cut by means of tubular drills fitted, if not with diamond points, at all events with a similar material. This invention was rediscovered in our day when the Mt. Cenis tunnel was half completed."

Many have scoffed at the claims of the Bible to a high civilization antedating the age of Abraham, and a knowledge of the arts and the working of metals. We have been told that such stories were mythical. Yet we now know that long before the time of Abraham, Sargon I. had established a great empire in Babylonia and held sway over the whole country, even to the Mediterranean coast. Before this king there were great empires. We only mention that of Zugal-zaggi-si; his rule extended to the Great Sea. Some of his exploits were engraved on large vases of delicately carved stone, one hundred and thirty-two lines on each vase; fragments of over one hundred of these vases have been discovered at the recently unearthed city of Nippur.

All this goes to confirm the Bible accounts, and to discredit those who have been laboring in vain to prove that Abraham and afterwards Moses lived in crude ages of which we know next to nothing.

b. *The motive of the ancient civilization.* What was it? Why were such mighty empires founded, temples and cities built? The old Babylonian kings were called Priest Kings and the secret of their wonderful activities and works is not a difficult one to

fathom. The motive was a religious one. "The key not only to Babylonian history but oriental history in general is found here: everything in social and political life turned upon what was more vital to the existence of the state than trade, or manufactures, or war, or diplomacy, namely religion.

The world was ransacked for the finest and most enduring of woods for temples and altars and palaces erected for the gods or their human representatives. Religion, in a word, was the all and end all of life and government to the first founders of states and empires." (Prof. J. H. McCurdy, *History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, Vol. 1, p. 117.) When this motive began to decay and the ancient religion became corrupt and filled with all sorts of abuses, then came a new departure: the call of Abraham to a new and purer religious life and to be the leader of a chosen people from whom was to come the Great Revealer of all truth.

QUESTIONS

What can be said of the Table of Nations; its scope; historic value; difference from all other tables; purpose? Give the teaching of the narrative of the Tower of Babel. What can be said of the condition of the ancient world; the commercial interests; literary culture; civilization; motive of action?

NOTE : The explorations at Nippur (supposed to be the ancient Calneh of Gen. 10 : 10) about 50 miles south-east of Babylon and the discovery of the law code of Hammurabi (supposed to be the king Amraphel of Gen. 14 : 1) confirm in a remarkable way the Scripture statements of a comparatively high civilization in ancient times.

PERIOD II

THE THEOCRACY

CHAPTERS

- V. ABRAHAM AND THE CHOSEN PEOPLE
- VI. MOSES AND THE EXODUS
- VII. JOSHUA AND THE CONQUEST
- VIII. THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL

V

ABRAHAM AND THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

Scripture: Genesis 12: 1-50: 26

PURPOSE OF THE NARRATIVE

We pass now from the consideration of beginnings and the general history of mankind to (Gen. 12:1) the story of the chosen man, Abraham, and a chosen family and nation whose course in success and failure is traced throughout the remainder of the Old Testament.

Ages had passed since the flood and men had again grown away from the worship of the true God and were given over to idolatrous and corrupt practices. God would not again destroy the world according to His promise to Noah; a new plan was to be put in operation.

“The purpose of the Most High was to select a man, and in him a family and nation, to be His witness on the earth, and the repository of ancient truths and hopes, until the fulness of redeeming time should come in Christ.”

Course of Events. Gen. 12: 1-50: 26. Abraham, called of God, leaves Ur of the Chaldees with his father, Terah, and journeys to Haran, about 600 miles northwest in a straight line from Ur, but much fur-

ther by the usual route of travel. Terah dies at Haran (Gen. 11:32), and the call being renewed (Gen. 12: 1) Abraham proceeds on his way to the land of Canaan; at Shechem he builds an altar to God, who appears to him (12: 6, 7). From here he goes toward the south and in consequence of a famine moves to Egypt. From Egypt he returns to Bethel and Lot leaves him. The promise of blessing is renewed to Abraham (13: 14-17) and he dwells in the plain of Mamre (13: 18). We have now related the incidents of the rescue of Lot from the plundering kings of the north (ch. 14); the making of a covenant (ch. 15); the promise of a son (ch. 17); the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (ch. 18, 19); the birth of Isaac, the child of promise (ch. 21); the death of Sarah, the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, the birth of the twin boys, Esau and Jacob, and the death of Abraham (ch. 23-25). The rest of the book of Genesis (ch. 26-50) shows how the Divine promises were renewed to Jacob, and the chosen family and nation begun in the sons of Jacob.

In brief we have here depicted "the fortunes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and his family" and how the Divine promises came through them.

Abraham (whose lot was cast in the times when the Elamite kings were reigning in Babylon) was seventy-five years old when he left Haran and he died at the age of one hundred and seventy-five. He lived to see his grandsons, Esau and Jacob, fifteen years old. Isaac (his son) died at the age of one hundred and eighty years.

"The Significance of Abraham's life was religious and not military, literary or legislative;" to miss this thought is to miss the whole meaning of the story. While other men were seeking for glory and honor or simply to live comfortably, Abraham was desirous only of obeying God. It is a singular fact that of the countless hordes of men of those times, many of them very eminent in worldly matters, the history of this man, who tried to serve God with all his heart, alone stands out as the greatest of that age. It pays to follow God.

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

(Ch. 12: 1-7; 15: 7; 17: 6; 18: 18.)

The call of Abraham came at a time when the world was quite well advanced in the arts of civilization; there were great cities, cultivated lands, commerce between nations and much literary activity, but it was all tending to decay. The ancient records show a wild ocean of moral and spiritual degeneracy, and the practice of immoralities that shock even those accustomed to the evils of heathenism.

a. *It was a call for a purpose*, to serve one God instead of many gods. Terah, Abraham's father, was not only a worshiper of idols, but according to tradition a maker of idol images. Abraham received no encouragement at home or from his associates.

b. *It was a call for a separation* from his home and native land.

c. *It was a call to service*, to stand for a principle

where everyone was against him and all social and national customs hostile. He was to enter into covenant relations with God and to stand alone with Him.

d. *It was a call to found a nation* which should have for its supreme object the worship of God.

In calling Abraham to found a new civilization, to be the father of a new nation, having for its basis a belief in one God and the supremacy of the moral law, God foresaw the ruin of the old civilization. We see now the cities of Chaldea, Canaan and Egypt heaps of ruins; we can look back to the effects of their sin. God looked forward to these effects, and as He prepared Noah and his ark in olden times for saving a remnant, so He prepared Abraham, and in him a new nation, for the founding of a new godly civilization.

PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

They are very broad and sweeping and reach to the end of the world; from the very nature of some of them they could not be fulfilled, in Abraham's day. It shows the supreme greatness of this man that he staggered not at these magnificent promises. His faith in God is simply sublime.

a. "*A great nation*," a great name. What a promise! Abraham died when Jacob was fifteen years old and he did not see the beginning of that nation which was to outlast Egypt and Babylon. The promise has literally been fulfilled, for in this nation through Christ all nations have been blessed. What earthly name is greater than that of Abraham

to-day? Jews, Mohammedans and Christians all revere it (ch. 12: 2).

b. *A Son*, through whom should come the blessing to the future generations. This promise was fulfilled in Isaac (ch. 17: 16).

COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

“This covenant develops mutual and peculiar obligations between God and His chosen ones.”

a. *God sealed and made sure to Abraham* the promises with a covenant; in other words gave him a sign of His presence and power, entering into relations from which He bound himself not to withdraw. Gen. 15: 7-21.

b. *God renewed the covenant to Abraham.* Gen. 17: 1-8; 22: 16-18; to Isaac, 26: 1-5; to Jacob, 28: 10-15.

EMIGRATION FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE

We are not to suppose that Abraham and his tribe were the only colonists from his country who took the long journey to the Mediterranean Sea and the regions beyond.

Northern Arabia was the cradle of the Semitic race from which Abraham sprang. This race largely peopled the East. Emigrants gravitated toward the fertile Nile valley and mingling with the Africans produced the Egyptians. The powerful kingdoms of Babylon and Assyria were founded by the same Semitic race; they were the ancestors of the Canaanites and Phenicians as well as the Hebrews. In fact this

ancient world was peopled by successive emigrations from the original center in North Arabia. The purpose of these emigrations is very plain; it was lust of conquest, seeking military glory, a betterment of condition or some end sought which centered in selfish aims.

Abraham emigrated with no selfish end in view but in obedience to a Divine call: he did not seek wealth or land or military glory but to do the Divine will. This marks his emigration as something separate and apart from all the others. We have a modern instance of this emigration for conscience sake in the action of the Pilgrim fathers in leaving England in the Mayflower to come to America for freedom to worship God, forsaking lands, houses and friends.

CONDITION OF ANCIENT LANDS AND CITIES

a. *Chaldea* before Abraham's time was a well-settled country. The monuments show abundant traces of civilization and culture. There were great cities with magnificent palaces, splendid temples and extensive libraries. The arts were well known; there were workers in fabrics, metals, stones, implements, weapons and ornaments. Sun-dials showed the hours of the day; time was divided then as now. The open country, often intersected by canals, was under a high state of cultivation.

The city of Ur was one of the most splendid and ancient cities of Chaldea. It was the seat of the great temple of the moon-god.

.b. *Egypt* was very populous, filled with a busy

commerce and highly civilized. It is thought that Abraham entered Egypt during the reign of the kings of the twelfth dynasty; the pyramids were then ancient. Long before the time of Abraham the Egyptians had built a wall across the isthmus of Suez in order to keep out the hordes of later emigrants which were sweeping down from the north; an Egyptian papyrus describes this wall in 2214 B. C., as being strictly guarded with sentries relieving each other at fixed hours through the day and night. But the Egyptians made an exception in favor of shepherds, which they needed; Abraham probably passed the wall in this way. Foreigners were always taken before the king to see whether they should remain or be sent back. We have an example of this pictured in the tombs at Beni-Hassan.

c. *Canaan.* All grades of civilization were represented in this strip of country from the purely nomadic to the cultivated dwellers in the cities. In Tyre and Sidon there were great wealth, glass works and dyeing factories, vast harbors crowded with sea-going ships and all the appliances of luxurious living close at hand.

But Canaan with its various grades of civilization was well fitted to be the place for the revelation of God to man. It was the geographical center of the ancient world. The word spoken here was known through all nations east and west, north and south.

d. *The moral condition* of Chaldea, Egypt and Canaan was very bad; outwardly the civilization was a splendid one; inwardly the moral state was so bad

that it cannot be described; it was hastening through this inward decay to its ruin which we now see to be so far-reaching and complete. This ruin God foresaw and selected Abraham to found a family and nation which should serve Him and form the basis of a new civilization. The bad state of Sodom and Gomorrah was not unique, but was the condition of many cities of those times. If Abraham had sacrificed Isaac (22: 1-13) the deed would have received universal commendation and not condemnation. Such was the state and feeling of the times, tutored under a gross and degrading heathenism.

HISTORICAL CONFIRMATIONS

There are not a few of these testimonies to the truth of the Biblical narrative; and as new excavations are made in the ruins of buried cities more and greater light is thrown upon the pages of the Divine Word. The ancient Scriptures have nothing to lose but everything to gain from the records of the past. Among the more recent confirmations is the opening up of the political, social, commercial and religious conditions of those days as they are related on the clay tablets found in the ancient libraries. These show Genesis to be correct in its statements of the times of Abraham and earlier.

Prof. Ebers, the eminent Egyptologist, takes twenty columns to point out the remarkable coincidences between Egyptian manners and customs as depicted on the monuments, and the Genesis narrative of Joseph. Prof. Burgsch, another great Egyptologist, found "an

Egyptian record belonging to the Hyksos period in the tomb of Baba at Elkab, of a famine lasting many years." This is the supposed time of Joseph's residence in Egypt. (Kittel's History of the Hebrews, Vol. 1, pp. 188-190.) Since the Christian era began there is the record of a seven years famine in Egypt which occurred 1064-1071; yet the Biblical account of this famine in the time of Joseph has been held to be an impossibility. The Egyptian monuments also confirm the statements of Genesis in regard to the ownership of the land by king and priests. (Kittel's History of the Hebrews, Vol. 1, pp. 190, 191.) The classical writers Diodorus and Herodotus confirm this statement.

The fourteenth chapter of Genesis, for a long time a stumbling block, has at length been made plain. Such experts as Schrader, Halevey and Delitzsch hold to the identity of the great Babylonian king, Khammurabi, with king Amraphel of the narrative. The other kings mentioned in the chapter have also been quite fully identified; so that the story of this raid of the northern kings upon the kings of the south, so long looked upon as a mere story, stands out as sober history. Prof. Hommel (*The Ancient Hebrew Tradition*, p. 126), declares that this raid took place in about the fourteenth year of the reign of King Khammurabi or Amraphel.

One of the most important contributions towards the clearing up of this subject of the relation of Abraham to his times is that of Prof. Fritz Hommel in his book "*The Ancient Hebrew Tradition*;" in

chapter third, he endeavors to show that the ancient Arabians were Monotheists or worshipers of one God, that this worship became corrupted and idolatrous, and that the calling of Abraham by God was not only to new conceptions of God, but for the restoration of the old Monotheism.

QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of the Genesis narrative? What can be said of the course of events? Give the main incidents. How old was Abraham when he was called? At what age did he die? How old was Isaac when he died? What is the significance of Abraham's life? What can be said of the call of Abraham; the promises to him; the covenant with him? Give a brief account of the ancient migrations of the peoples. What was meant by Abraham's emigration for conscience sake? What can be said of the condition of ancient lands and cities; Chaldea, Egypt, Canaan? Why was Canaan well fitted to be the place for a special revelation to Abraham? What can be said of the moral condition of the ancient lands? Give some historical confirmations of the Genesis narrative.

VI

MOSES AND THE EXODUS

Scripture: Exodus 1-Deuteronomy 34: 12

CONNECTION BETWEEN GENESIS AND EXODUS

There is a long space of time between the conclusion of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus of which we have no account in detail. Abraham died when Jacob his grandson was fifteen years old. Joseph the son of Jacob, at first sold as a slave in Egypt, had risen to great power and influence; he died at the age of 110 years. Although the sons of Israel had greatly increased in substance under the royal favor of Joseph, yet when he died and a new dynasty came to the throne, their very numbers and wealth made them objects of suspicion and hatred. The Pharaohs, desiring to break their spirit and subdue them, burdened them with difficult tasks and reduced them to the most abject slavery. To a free people this subjection must have seemed very hard, and when they remembered the promises given to Abraham and his descendants it was by no means easy for them to bear the bitterness of their lot. So the ages passed and God seemed as far off as ever. But when "the tale of bricks is doubled, then comes

Moses." God had not forgotten His people or His promises.

The Narrative recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy shows how God remembered His promise to Abraham, "I will make of thee a great nation" (Gen. 12: 2), and the first steps in the fulfillment of that promise. We have here given the history of the deliverance of the people from Egypt, the making of the nation, the giving of the laws, the wandering in the desert and the arrival upon the border of the promised land.

THE PLACE OF ISRAEL IN EGYPTIAN HISTORY

(a) *The Political situation* at the time of the Exodus was a strange one: the great powers of the world were weakened in many ways, and the road was open to the Sinaitic Peninsula and to the possession of Canaan, as it had not been for centuries.

Joseph came into Egypt during the reign of the Shepherd kings: they were usurpers and conquerors from the north. There had been fourteen dynasties in Egypt before the Hyksos or Shepherd kings. The magnificent civilization of Egypt had become weakened through corruption in politics and religion, and internal dissensions had arisen. The Shepherd kings reigned for about five hundred years; they were at length driven out by Aahmes I. (about 1580 B.C.), the first king of the brilliant eighteenth dynasty. This expulsion was by no means an easy task, as the Shepherd kings had thoroughly fortified the cities. Their last stand was made at Avaris, on

the extreme northeast of Egypt, where they had an intrenched camp with 240,000 soldiers. Now began the oppression of the Israelites, who had undoubtedly favored and helped the Shepherd kings under whom Joseph had risen to power. Such was the awakening of the nation under the native Egyptian kings that it did not stop at driving out the alien Shepherd kings, but under Thothmes I. Palestine, Syria and the countries up to the Euphrates river were conquered and annexed to Egypt. This wide extent of domain continued in the possession of Egypt until after the death of Thothmes III. Now again began a decline in the glory of the country of the Nile. In 1415 B. C. (or about this time) Amenophis IV. attempted to revolutionize the faith of Egypt and change its worship to that of the god of the Sun-disk. Such was the opposition of the priests of the old religion at Thebes that the king caused his capital to be removed to another site. To this circumstance we are indebted for the so-called Tel-el-amarna letters, a part of the royal correspondence dug up a few years ago on the site of the new capital city; these letters, from Gaza, Tyre, Beyrut, Acco, Arvad, Jerusalem, etc., enable us to look directly into the manners and customs of the times 1400 B. C., and confirm so far as they touch the Bible narrative. But the point in this matter is that so much opposition was stirred up at home by this religious controversy that the power of Egypt was weakened abroad; these letters (some of them) are calls for reinforcements of soldiers and war material to hold revolting cities and provinces. Fi-

nally Syria and Palestine fell from the weak grasp of Egypt into the hands of the Hittites. An attempt was made under Rameses II., the Pharaoh of the oppression and third king of the nineteenth dynasty, to retake these provinces, but it failed. But in course of time the Hittites were compelled to relinquish Palestine and Syria on account of the attack of the invaders from about the Mediterranean Sea.

In the time of Menephta Egypt was invaded by barbarians aided by revolts of subject tribes. Now the strange thing about this political situation (as noted at the beginning) is that the Sinaitic Peninsula, Palestine and Syria, were, through the weakening of the Hittites and Egyptians, without any strong government; this had not been the state of these countries for ages. The consequence was a lot of small, independent states and cities ready to be the prey of the first invader. It was a prepared situation for the chosen people. (Mc Curdy's "History, Prophecy and the Monuments," Vol. 1, pp. 144-163 ff. Geikie, New Ed., O. T., Vol. 1, p. 35 ff. Bib. Sac., Apr. and July, 1897.) It was during this time, according to certain scholars, that the Exodus took place.

NOTE—It is thought now by some, in view of recent discoveries, that the Exodus took place in the time of Amenophis IV. (see above) also a time of great disturbance. The date of the reign of this king harmonizes much better with Biblical chronology.

The writer of Israel's sojourn in Egypt has received a splendid tribute to his historical accuracy from the monuments. "What is said in Genesis and Exodus of the character of the country, its government and

its court and the customs of the people, are shown to be pictures faithfully drawn from the life."

b. *The religious situation* at the time of the Exodus.

Some scholars assert that there is more than a hint that the earliest worship of Egypt was that of one God. In the Bulaq papyri, p. 17, there is a beautiful hymn translated by Goodwin. The first of it is as follows:

"One only art Thou, Thou creator of beings. And Thou alone makest all that is created . . . He is one only, Alone, without equal, Dwelling alone in the holiest of holies."

This doctrine, however, was deemed too refined for the people and was cherished by the priests as one of the mysteries. Multitudes of gods were invented for the worship of the people. Birds, insects, beasts of the field, were worshiped and had great temples erected to them. (J. E. Miller in Herzog, Vol. 16, p. 49.) Clement of Alexandria thus describes the strange and hideous worship: "The holy places of the temples are hidden by great veils of cloth of gold. If you advance toward the interior of the temple to see the statue of the god, a priest comes to you with a grave air, chanting a hymn in the Egyptian language, and lifts a corner of the gorgeous curtain to show you the divinity. But what do you see? A cat, a crocodile, a serpent, or some other dangerous animal. The god of the Egyptians appears; it is a beast tumbling about on a carpet of purple." At one city a dog would receive special worship, at

another a wolf, and at another a goat. "The goat of Mendes was the soul of Osiris; the calf of Mnevis of On, the soul of Ra, the great sun-god . . . But the ox Apis, at Memphis, not far from Goshen, was the supreme expression of the divinity in an animal form; he was recognized as an incarnation of Osiris and Ptah together." This animal adoration led to fearful and gross immorality and the degeneracy of the people. Amid a splendid outward civilization, with great temples and buildings that challenge the admiration of the world, the common people were unspeakably miserable; driven to work, without any pay, upon public buildings, they died by thousands and no one cared. Still there lingered noble ideas from the past of the immortality of the soul.

We may be sure the Israelites did not take their religion from Egypt. The Mosaic ritual demanded the slaughter of oxen and rams, the symbols of the gods Osiris and Amon; to kill which was punishable by death according to Egyptian law. These animal sacrifices, by the Israelites, showed that Egyptian idolatry was to be utterly discredited and disallowed besides the deeper meaning.

THE OPPRESSION OF ISRAEL BY EGYPT

"And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor." Ex. 1:13, 14.

The monuments confirm the Biblical statements.

The great buildings of Egypt were constructed by forced labor. The slaves were driven to their tasks by the cruel lash of the overseers; this was a part of the labor system: the land was full of wretched slaves living miserable lives. In the pictorial representations at Beni-Hassan the slaves are shown being beaten by short sticks in the hands of the task-masters.

In Exodus 1:11, it is declared that the Israelites "built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses." Through excavations in mounds to the northeast of Cairo, about thirty-five miles, the site of Pithom has been settled and also the fact that it was built by Rameses II., Pharaoh of the oppression. These excavations were made by M. Naville, who also discovered the store chambers with solid brick partitions eight to ten feet through. Miss Amelia B. Edwards, the well-known Egyptian authority, (*Pharaohs, Fellahs and Explorers*, p. 50) writes that "It is a curious and interesting fact that the Pithom bricks are of three qualities. In the lower courses of these massive walls they are mixed with chopped straw; higher up when the straw may be supposed to have run short, the clay is found to be mixed with reeds, the same kind of reeds which grow to-day in the bed of the old Pharonic Nile and which are translated as 'stubble' in the Bible. Finally when the reeds were used up, the bricks of the upper courses consist of mere Nile mud, with no binding substance whatever." Ex. 5: 6-19.

In a tomb on the hill, Abd-el-Qurnah, in the time of

Thothmes III., prisoners are represented at work, over them is a taskmaster, and these words are painted as if coming out of his mouth, "Don't idle, the stick is in my hand." (Ex. 5:17.) (Bunsen's *Urkunden*, Vol. 1, p. 114. Geikie, Vol. II., O. T., New Ed., p. 112.)

Israel is mentioned by name in an Egyptian inscription (found in Dec., 1895) and dated in the fifth year of Menephta. The part of the tablet relating to Israel reads as follows: "The people of Israel is spoiled, it hath no seed." Professors Sayce, Hommel, Dr. Selin and others understand this inscription to refer to the suppression of the Israelites. This supplies a much sought for link in the historic chain. (Petrie in *Contemp. Review*, May, 1896.) By some the "Aperieu" mentioned in the monuments are supposed to be the Hebrews. Many other proofs might be added to show the hard service which the children of Israel had to undergo before their release from the land of bondage.

But God was with this people preparing them for a great work. So "the more they afflicted them the more they multiplied and grew." Ex. 1:12.

THE GREAT DELIVERER, MOSES

Never was a greater task given to a man than to Moses. Slavery, even at its best, brutalizes and sensualizes a man's nature. Egyptian slavery was the worst that the world has ever seen. The work of Moses was to take a people that had been beaten and hounded to work all their lives and who knew nothing (with here and there exceptions) but the severest toil, and

make it into a great nation with the purest spiritual and moral ideals and conceptions that man has ever known. No wonder that Moses shrank when he fully realized what was before him. Ex. 4:1.

a. *The Divine element in the call of Moses* must not be lost sight of for a moment. Humanly he had seen the affliction of his people, tried to remedy it (Ex. 2: 11-15) and ignominiously fled to the desert, where he remained for forty years, making no attempt during all this time, so far as we know, to help his brethren, but with a sore heart for their afflictions.

Now comes in the Divine element. God remembered His people and His covenant with Abraham (Ex. 2: 24, 25). He appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3) and told him that he was to go to the Children of Israel and to Pharaoh in His name. It is certain that the Hebrews could not release themselves, neither could Moses, of himself, help them. All through his life Moses shows his absolute dependence upon God; this is the secret of his greatness and his strength.

b. *The task was threefold*: (1) Religious, to make a church with the great thought of one God, ruler and Father of all. (2) Political, to make a great state or nation and so to cement the people together by wise laws that the great spiritual conceptions could abide in safety and the nation itself be able to survive internal dissensions and the rude buffetings of other nations. (3) Social, to keep the individual and the family pure and clean and in right relations.

c. *The laws of Moses*; the end or purpose of these

precepts and laws was to make a "Holy Nation," "and you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Ex. 19: 6. "Sanitary and dietary laws were not laid down as such but are made distinctive marks of a consecrated life of a chosen people." (For further exposition of the laws see the author's "Bible Study by Books," Exodus and Leviticus, pp. 15-23.)

d. *Moses' life* falls naturally into three parts. (1) Forty years at the court of Pharaoh, where he was taught in all the learning of the Egyptians. Acts 7: 22. The schools and universities of the priests in Moses' day were famous for their scholarship. There were four great temple universities, at Memphis, Sais, Thebes and On. That of On was the best and greatest; the high priest here was a prince of Egypt and ranked next to Pharaoh. It is, probably, at this university that Moses was educated; it is not far from the modern Cairo, about five miles to the north-east. (2) Forty years in the desert, where he learned many valuable lessons (Ex. 3: 1) not only in self-control but also in the school of God. Here also he gained that valuable intimate knowledge of Sinai which was to serve him so well in leading the great host of Hebrews in their wanderings. At last God appeared to him when he was ready for the work which He had for him. (3) Forty years as leader and legislator for the Israelites in their march to the promised land.

THE EXODUS

a. *Ample preparation* must have been made for

moving so great a multitude, "six hundred thousand on foot, that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle." Ex. 12:37, 38. That the Hebrews had so much cattle is accounted for by Dr. Chadwick (Expositors' Bible, Exodus, p. 196) from the fact that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was driven out of his northern provinces for several years by a revolt of subject races, and during these years the Israelites had a chance to recuperate and get something for themselves. Ex. 2:24, 25. At the time of the exodus he had put down the revolt and again oppressed most cruelly this people.

b. *The expedition* was evidently well organized. Pharaoh was appealed to again and again and entreated to let the children of Israel go. Ex. 5:1; 7:1. The children of Israel were fully acquainted by Moses and Aaron with what God intended to do. Ex. 4:30, 31.

c. *The Plagues* together with the negotiations had with Pharaoh, must have occupied nearly a year. This would allow time for gathering things together for the journey.

d. *The significance of the plagues* was very great in the effect that was produced not only upon the Egyptians but upon the Israelites. The Hebrews must be shown the supremacy of Jehovah above all gods. The magnificent temples, the gorgeous ritual, the chanting priests, had made a deep impression upon their minds; this must be effaced by such a display of Jehovah's power over all the forces of nature that there should be no doubt of the fact. The Pharaoh

himself, "who was the incarnation of the great sun-god Ra," was so humbled in this contest that he was at last urgent to send out of his domains the people of Jehovah. Egyptian power, enchantments and idolatry were made to look mean and small.

No wonder that they sang, after the passage of the Red Sea, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song and He is become my salvation," etc. Exodus 15:1-21.

e. *The passage of the Red Sea*, the giving of manna and the quails, the handing down of the law, have in them miraculous elements which cannot be eliminated without destruction of the narrative. Much can be explained on natural grounds but still there is that in this narrative which must be ascribed to direct divine power. It was the purpose of God to bring this people out and make of it a great nation for a special purpose, and "what God requires *must* ultimately be done."

THE SCHOOL OF THE DESERT

A race of slaves was to be changed into freemen. No matter how much it may be desired, such a process takes time. The desert was a great training school. It was a time of rich religious experience and education. Not only were civil, ceremonial and moral laws promulgated (and the Decalogue, Ex. 20:1-18, given from Mt. Sinai by God), but these laws were learned and put in practice. The hearts of the people were

knit to their leaders and to each other; they were made to understand their mission. The free life of the desert also tended to produce a hardy and sturdy race.

"*The Desert of Sinai*, it is now known, was capable of supporting a large population at the time of the exodus." "It would be a mistake to suppose that the whole multitude marched day after day and pitched night after night, for forty long years making an endless round of the desert," rather it would seem that the tribes were scattered, after the manner of the Arab tribes of to-day, seeking pasturage for their flocks and herds, having the tabernacle for a common center and rallying point which would be moved from time to time. (Prof. James Robertson, "Book by Book," pp. 45,46.)

A few years ago hostile critics declared that the account of the making of the tabernacle and its structure could not be true, as the times were too primitive to admit of it; but now through research we have ample evidence of the great skill in such matters long before the exodus. Fine linen was used in many ways. The whole process of working gold is depicted in the tombs of Beni-Hassan as early as the twelfth dynasty. A remarkable collection of exquisitely wrought jewelry (now in the Boulak museum) was found in the tomb of Queen Ahotep of the eighth dynasty.

The trouble with the old world was not its civilization but its awful parody of religion and its shameless immorality. It was in decay, and hastening to its

fall. Israel was a new shoot of a new tree that was to bear a new civilization coming out of right spiritual conceptions.

QUESTIONS.

What is the connection between Genesis and Exodus? What does the narrative given in Exodus to Deuteronomy show? What is the place of Israel in Egyptian history? The political and religious situations? How may we be sure that the Israelites did not take their religion from Egypt? What can be said of the oppression of Israel by Egypt? How do the monuments confirm the Biblical statements? Where is Israel mentioned by name in Egyptian inscriptions? What can be said of the work of Moses? What is the Divine element in his call? How was his task threefold? What was the purpose of his laws? Into what three parts does Moses' life fall; what can be said of each? What can be said of the exodus? The preparation for it? The plagues and their significance? The passage of the Red Sea, etc.? What is meant by the school of the desert?

VII

JOSHUA AND THE CONQUEST

Scripture: Joshua

THE NARRATIVE

The history in the book of Joshua follows closely upon that of Deuteronomy. Immediately upon the death of Moses, Joshua took command of the host of Israel, not seizing upon this high office but having been formally chosen and set apart before all the people for this purpose. Deuteronomy 31:7,8. This choice was confirmed by God. Joshua 1, also 5:13-15.

a. *The book of Joshua* is naturally divided into two parts: First, 1-12, which relates the conquest of Canaan; second, 13-24, the allotment of the country among the tribes.

b. *The story is consistent* throughout and has the marks of genuine history. Some three hundred cities and towns are mentioned. A large number of these have been definitely located by Dr. Robinson and the Palestine Exploration Fund. The researches of the officers of this same Palestine Exploration Fund also show that the boundaries of the tribal possessions were almost entirely natural and the lists of cities and towns follow a certain order (Dr. James Robert-

son in "Book by Book," p. 64). In 1883, Prof. F. K. Cheyne, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, pronounced the Hittites, mentioned in Joshua 1:4, to be unhistorical, but now the monuments have proved the learned professor to be wrong and Joshua right, ("The Hittites," C. R. Condor, 1898). So powerful was this Hittite nation at one time that Egypt was glad to make treaties with it. The Tel-el-amarna letters (mentioned in the lesson on Moses), describe the state of cities and kings. Condor declares that where they touch upon matters mentioned in the book of Joshua they fully carry out its statements.

c. *In time* this narrative occupies about twenty-five years.

THE COURSE OF EVENTS

By chapters.

1. Joshua is put in commission by God and encouraged for his work.

2. Joshua sends out spies to look over the country.

3 and 4. The Jordan is crossed; the waters being miraculously divided by God for the passage of the Israelites.

5. The Passover is kept at Gilgal.

6. The walls of Jericho are cast down and the city taken.

7 and 8. The children of Israel at first repulsed at Ai on account of a sin, afterwards when the sin is put away they take the city.

9 and 10. The southern Canaanites combine

against Joshua and are defeated at Beth-horon.

11. The northern Canaanites combine against Joshua and are overwhelmed at the waters of Merom.

12. Recapitulation of conquered kings and countries.

13-19. Division of the land; the allotment of cities; the nine and one-half tribes receiving their inheritance on the west side of the Jordan river and the two and one-half tribes on the east; the Tabernacle is set up at Shiloh.

20. The Cities of Refuge are appointed.

21. Certain cities are given to the Levites.

22. The two and one-half tribes take possession of their territory on the east side of the river Jordan.

23 and 24. Farewell address and death of Joshua.

JOSHUA

a. *He was a descendant* of Joseph, of the tribe of Ephraim and the son of Nun. 1 Chron. 7:20-27.

b. *He was born* in Egypt and at the time of the Exodus was a little over forty years of age. When he succeeded to the command of Moses he was over eighty years old. He died at the age of one hundred and ten years (Joshua 24: 29, 30), and was buried in Timnath-herah in Mount Ephraim.

c. *He was fully prepared for his work.* He was closely associated with Moses in the wilderness. He commanded the host which defeated Amalek, with the help of God, in Rephidim. Exodus 17:10-16. He was with Moses when he went up into the Mount

of God. Exodus 24:13. He was called by God to succeed Moses and set apart for the command in the subjugation of the Canaanites. Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 31:14-23.

d. *He was great in war.* As a general he was quick to see and take advantage of the plans of his enemies. Witness the strategy at Ai and the campaigns against the southern and northern combinations of kings. Joshua 1-12.

e. *He was great in peace.* He planned, not only to subdue the enemies of Israel, but also to map out the boundaries of the tribes, in order that there might be a permanent occupation of the land. In this getting Canaan ready to be the settled abode of the Hebrews, he displays statesmanlike qualities of the very highest order. Joshua 13-22.

f. *He was a man who trusted supremely in God* and relied upon Him. His last address shows how deep was his religious feeling. Joshua 23, 24.

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

When one nation or people goes to war with another nation or people there is naturally some reason for it. The Bible as a reasonable book fully states the causes which led to the destruction of the Canaanites and the reason why the Israelites were brought in to occupy this land.

a. *The destruction of the Canaanites.* Much false sympathy has been wasted upon the destruction of the Canaanites because the stress has been laid upon

the driving them out and not upon their character, where it belongs and where the Scriptures place it.

The abominations practiced in the name of religion were something awful; every evil thing was worshiped. We have had the testimony of the Bible to this fact, now comes the word of the monuments. Lenormant in his manual of the Ancient History of the East (Vol. 3, p. 219), has said that "no other nation has rivaled the Canaanites in the mixture of blood and debauchery with which they sought to honor the Deity." This heathenism was so foul that fifteen hundred years later its spread in Rome was bewailed by the Satirists of the day. (Juvenal Sat. 3. 62.)

Sodom and Gomorrah, where ten righteous men could not be found, were fit types of this unholy land. Some of these abominations are described in Leviticus 18: 21-31; Deut. 12: 30-32.

"The chief god was Baal—the sun—who was worshiped under different names in different places, Moloch, Chemosh," but everywhere his worship was fierce and cruel. "His consort Ashtaroth, the Babylonian goddess, Istar, the goddess of love, worshiped as the morning star, Venus," fostered abominations in her worship almost inconceivable in our times; it was, in one word, a worship of impurity.

The driving out of the Canaanites is always represented in the Scriptures as a punishment for their sins. Lev. 18: 24, 25. The destruction that has fallen upon all the ancient nations is represented by the prophets to be on account of sin. Even Israel,

after repeated warning, was not spared. Jerusalem on account of her sins was finally devoted to an awful sack and ruin under the Romans.

b. *The incoming of the Israelites* was to begin a new nation, to start a new civilization. It was a new thing in the world that all idolatrous symbols should be suppressed, the worship of an unseen God was beyond ordinary grasp and opposed to every mode of thought. Yet Joshua plainly tells the Israelites that, although this land had been given them for an express purpose, unless they are righteous they will be cast out as the heathen before them. Joshua 24: 20.

c. *The difficulties* in the way of conquering this land were very great. The spies sent out by Moses had reported walled cities and great warriors, although it was a goodly land. Num. 13: 17; 14: 9. Here were leagues of kings, able warriors, iron chariots and well-drilled men. Civilization in some parts of this country was very high; the Phenicians on the coast were the greatest maritime and commercial people then known; their colonies had spread over all the coasts of the Mediterranean; their land was the home of the arts and the sciences; the Greeks owed their literary culture to the Phenicians. (Kenrick's Phenicia, ch. 8, 9.) But all was in decay on account of the abominations practiced. Still the people were fighting for lands and homes and were desperate in their resistance.

d. *The military* campaign was well planned. No attempt was made to force a way against the "hill

strongholds" on the south, but the Israelites were led by a circuitous route through Edom and Moab until they came to the northern end of the Dead Sea. Here was the center and key of Palestine. (It was in this way that the Arabs invaded the country in the seventh century.) "It was a direct push for the heart of the land, cutting its tribes in two; the movements of the great leader were rapid and vigorous." Jordan was crossed, Jericho and Ai taken, and in a short period Joshua was in the center of the land ready to strike either way.

e. *The Divine agency* must not be left out of account. It was Jehovah who divided the waters of Jordan and caused the walls of Jericho to fall. It was God who commissioned Joshua for his great work. He had a plan which was more far-reaching in its scope than this people could comprehend; although much was done, yet the land was not fully subdued because the Israelites did not carry out the Divine commands. Yet a step in advance was taken towards the beginning of the kingdom of God on earth.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SEVEN YEARS WAR

There has never been a greater war for a greater cause. The battle of Waterloo decided the fate of Europe, but this series of contests in far-off Canaan decided the fate of the world. The old civilizations were decaying, soon to fall, their cities to become heaps of ruins on account of their iniquities, could a new civilization arise in their midst with a pure and

holy purpose to serve God? This question is answered in the book of Joshua. The Israelites not only fought for themselves, but for us as well; for purity in the individual, the home and the temple; for the worship of one God, Creator and Father of all. Out of this nation came Christ; out of Christ has come the Christian civilization of Europe and America.

a. *The underlying idea in the "Mosaic institutions" was that of a Divine society, with God as its acknowledged head, the books of Moses as its code of laws and morals, and the priesthood with its prophetic gifts of Urim and Thummim as the medium of communication between the Ruler and His people.*" (Cambridge Bible for Schools. Judges, p. 15.)

b. *God is shown to be a covenant-keeping God and able to fulfil all the promises which He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

QUESTIONS

How does this book follow closely upon that of Deuteronomy? How is the book divided? How is the story confirmed? Give the course of events? Who was Joshua; where was he born; how old when the exodus took place; when did he die; where was he buried? How was he prepared for his work? How was he great in war; in peace; in religious convictions? What can be said of the conquest of Canaan; the destruction of the Canaanites; the incoming of the Israelites; the difficulties in the way of conquering the land; the military campaign; the Divine agency? Give the significance of the seven years war; the underlying idea in the Mosaic institutions. How is God shown to be a covenant-keeping God?

VIII

THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL

Scripture: Judges and Ruth

THE TIMES OF THE JUDGES

a. *This is a transition time* in the history of the Israelites. It follows immediately upon the close of the book of Joshua; it lasts from the death of Joshua until the rise of Samuel, or for several hundreds of years. It is not an easy period to understand or explain. Things do not run smoothly. We do not have all the story, but a series of vivid historical pictures of Israel falling into sin, being oppressed, crying unto God and being delivered by the judges who were raised up for the purpose.

The key-note of the book is found in Judges 2: 16-19.

After the settlement in Canaan the tribes seem to have fallen apart, there was no national government; the only common tie was the worship of Jehovah and as that became weakened there was no political unity. "There was no king, no fixed capital, no fixed government." The supremacy passed from one tribe to another as occasion arose or necessity demanded. The sanctuary set up in Shiloh (Joshua 18: 1) seems to have remained there (Judges 18: 31; 19: 18). It was

a period analagous to that of the middle ages in the Christian church. It was a hard school, but out of it was to come great results for the after history of the chosen nation.

b. *The situation* is a peculiar one. The people were deprived of their great leaders, Moses and Joshua; they had passed from a wandering life and the free air of the plains to a settled life in towns and cities; they had to change their habits and customs and uphold a religion which would have no intercourse with the native idolatry. All this in face of the hostility of the inhabitants of the land, who looked upon them as usurpers and took every occasion to show their bitterness of feeling. The marvel is that the Hebrews were able to survive.

c. *The problem* was, to take firm possession of the land and keep their religious faith without amalgamation with the heathen population. The time of peace was a harder one than that of war.

d. *The religious element* is made very prominent. So long as they obeyed God, they were kept and delivered from their enemies; when they forgot God and fell into the ways of the heathen round about, they were oppressed by their enemies and sold into bondage.

e. "*The judges* were begotten by the necessities of their age and environment." A common danger, most frequently an invasion, threatened a town or tribe. At such a moment a man of superior energy, called by God and the people, arose and, rallying the tribesmen, led them out to victory. He then naturally

remained at the head and became the arbiter of disputes. This rule sometimes included a small and sometimes a large territory.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

a. *The name* is derived from the heroes whose exploits form the subject of its central and principal part (ch. 2: 7; 16: 31).

b. *Analysis*. This book consists of three well-defined parts.

(1) The preface (ch. 1-3: 6). The design of this is to prepare the reader for what the writer is about to relate and to give the reason why the Israelites did not subdue the land more quickly. There are two portions to this preface: first, a recapitulation of events which really took place in Joshua's time with another statement of his death (ch. 1-2: 10); second, certain reflections upon the history about to be related (ch. 2: 11; 3: 6).

(2) *The main narrative*: the exploits of the Judges. There are thirteen judges (if Abimelech, who is not termed a judge, be left out, there are but twelve). 1, Othniel (ch. 3: 7-11); 2, Ehud (ch. 3: 12-30); 3, Shamgar (ch. 3: 31); 4, Barak (Deborah) (ch. 4-5); 5, Gideon (ch. 6: 1-8: 32); 6, Abimelech (ch. 8: 33-9: 57); 7, Tola (ch. 10: 1, 2); 8, Jair (ch. 10: 3-5); 9, Jephthah (ch. 10: 6-12: 7); 10, Ibzan (ch. 12: 8-10); 11, Elon (ch. 12: 11, 12); 12, Abdon (ch. 12: 13-15); 13, Samson (ch. 13-16).

The order of events is as follows (S. R. Driver. *The Literature of the O. T.*, p. 160-161):

1. (ch. 3: 8), Israel serves Chusham-Rishathaim eight years.
2. (ch. 3:11), Deliverance by Othniel; the land rests forty years.
3. (ch. 3: 14), Israel serves Eglon eighteen years.
4. (ch 3:30), Deliverance by Ehud; the land rests eighty years.
5. (ch. 4: 2, 3), Oppression by Jabin twenty years.
6. (ch. 5: 31), Deliverance by Deborah or Barak; the land rests forty years.
7. (ch. 6:1), Oppression by Midian seven years.
8. (ch. 8:28), Deliverance by Gideon; the land rests forty years.
9. (ch. 9: 22), Abimelech reigns over Israel three years.
10. (ch. 10:2), Tola judges Israel twenty-three years.
11. (ch. 10: 3), Jair judges Israel twenty-two years.
12. (ch. 10: 8), Oppression by Ammon eighteen years.
13. (ch. 12: 7), Jephthah judges Israel six years.
14. (ch. 12: 9), Ibzan judges Israel seven years.
15. (ch. 12: 11), Elon judges Israel ten years.
16. (ch. 12: 13), Abdon judges Israel eight years.
17. (ch. 13:1), Oppression by the Philistines forty years.
18. (ch. 15: 20; 16: 31), Samson judges Israel twenty years. The sum of these years is 410. It is thought that some of the periods overlap each other,

which, if true, would reduce the total number of years for this period.

(3) An appendix (ch. 17-21) describing in some detail two incidents belonging to this period, viz., the migration of a part of the tribe of Dan to the north (ch. 17-18), and the war of the Israelites against Benjamin arising out of the outrage at Gibeah (ch. 19-21). The book of Ruth is also a picture of the times of the judges and shows that even in those days there were good men and true women.

THE TASK OF THE ISRAELITES

a. *To keep what had been gained.* Although the country had been subdued yet there still remained large numbers of Canaanites in the land who would naturally strive to get back their power; some cities and towns had been left unconquered and these became rallying places for the disaffected. Hence the efforts of the Israelites would be turned to a great degree in maintaining themselves as masters of the situation; this they did not always succeed in doing. In the defeat of Sisera a great and notable victory was gained over the old tribes.

b. *To repel invaders from the outside* who thought the Israelites an easy prey; such an invasion was that of the Midianites, who came up and spread themselves over the land.

c. *To dominate the social and religious relations.* All the customs of the country were bound up with heathenism; every high hill had its altar; every grove was a place of idolatry; in eating and drinking, in vis-

iting, all was regulated according to an idol code of laws. These were opposed to the Mosaic laws and institutions and could have no fellowship with them. The trouble arose when the Israelites came into living relations with the Canaanites and the land had rest; they would at first yield in non-essentials and finally be seduced away from their own institutions. This is what repeatedly happened. The religion and social customs of the Canaanites appealed to the love of ease in men, to the passionate nature, and if a strict watch was not kept there came terrible lapses into evil.

d. *To advance* from the thought of a patriarchal and tribal government to that of a great nation and people under the immediate care and supervision of Jehovah. To their credit, the Israelites did make great progress during these troublous times. We see at first that the tribes, after the death of Joshua, stand aloof from each other; there is no central government or administration; even the villages and towns are self-complete and independent. It looks from the narrative as though most matters of public interest were decided by a council which was composed of all the free men of the city (ch. 9:2, 6). The affairs of the larger places were in the hands of an oligarchy, self-elected or ruling by common consent (ch. 8:14). Justice was administered at the gate of the city by the elders and the sentence was carried out by the interested parties. There were no officers of the law. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (ch. 17:6). There was no warrior

class, no standing army. It was "Home Rule" carried to the extreme.

Little by little, however, things began to change. The people saw the benefits of associating for a common purpose. They realized that they could make no headway without banding together and upholding their faith in God. "By degrees the primitive patriarchal organization was set aside," citadels were built for protection, towns and cities were encircled by walls, tribal communism was gradually abandoned, and a mighty people began to emerge for a great work.

The discipline of the age of the Judges was very severe. The very isolation of the tribes and towns served its purpose, for had a great king arisen he might have led the nation back into idolatry before it had been strengthened by years of hardness, and had acquired powers of resistance.

The times may be compared to the work incident to preparing the foundations for a magnificent building: all is confusion to the uninitiated, but the architect has in mind the completed structure. So here, God understood the plan for this nation. He had a great work for it to do and it had to be disciplined for its magnificent career,—to stand and endure and uphold the faith when great war cyclones were sweeping the mightiest world powers into oblivion.

THE PRESERVATION OF THE ISRAELITES

This keeping of the nation through troublous times

was a part of the plan of God. This history differs from all other histories on this account. There is an advance toward a higher conception of God and a more perfect unity. Other nations have had their heroes who have done mighty deeds, but they have worked towards placing their peoples on a higher plane of civilization or giving them greater military glory. The Israelitish judges were set to do greater things, that through their achievements the nation might have a firmer grasp upon God and uphold His cause more valiantly.

QUESTIONS

What can be said of the times of the Judges; as a transition time; what was the problem; what can be said of the religious element; how were the Judges raised up? Why is the book of Judges so named; into what three parts is it divided; give the characteristics of each part; what does the preface profess to tell us; what can be said of the main narrative; of the appendix? What was the task of the Israelites; in keeping what had been gained; in repelling invasion; in dominating social and religious relations; in advanced thought of their mission? What was the evident purpose of God in preserving the Israelites?

PERIOD III

THE KINGDOM

CHAPTERS

- IX. THE RISE OF THE KINGDOM
- X. THE GLORY OF THE KINGDOM
- XI. THE DIVISION AND FALL OF THE KINGDOM
- XII. PROPHETS OF THE KINGDOM

IX

THE RISE OF THE KINGDOM

Scripture: 1 Samuel

INTRODUCTION

“The book of Judges closes with the significant remark, ‘In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.’” Jud. 21: 25. The book of Samuel opens with the birth of the prophet who was raised up by the providence of God to usher in a new regime which should reduce this chaos to order. The book of Ruth closes with the statement that David was the son of Jesse. Samuel is the one who prepares the way for David, the greatest king of Israel, who was the ancestor of Christ, the King of all kings. So does Bible history stand connected, period by period, event by event.

In the period of the Judges we saw one tribe after another coming forward and asserting itself through its leading man as an emergency arose; now we come to a time when the tribes are to be welded together in a monarchy.

THE CONDITION OF THE TIMES

a. *The state of Israel.* The age was a dark and

troublesome one. The opening chapters of 1 Samuel show a sad condition of affairs.

Religion was at a low ebb. Hophni and Phineas by their evil conduct had made the service of Jehovah to be abhorred by the people (ch. 2:12-17, 22-25). Eli, their father and High Priest, a good but weak old man, was unable to restrain them. With a priesthood corrupt and inciting to evil, the people rapidly fell away from the worship of God and the only bond of national unity was seriously weakened. Hence came troubles which rapidly assumed threatening aspects and menaced the very existence of the people.

Politically, the state of the nation was one in which there was little hope. The tribes were disunited and pressed by powerful enemies upon all sides. The battle of Aphek (ch. 4), where the Philistines captured the ark, was the culmination of a series of disasters which almost led the Hebrews to despair. The ark had been carried into the battle with a superstitious hope that it would bring them a great victory, but God showed them in this defeat that there could be no victory without turning from sin and a sincere reformation of heart. The Philistines now overran Israel and reduced it to subjection, taking away the weapons of warfare and removing even the smiths, so that the Hebrews had to go to the Philistines to get their agricultural implements sharpened (ch. 13:19, 20). For twenty years this state of things seems to have existed; the Israelites in practical slavery and

worshipping the heathen gods to some extent (ch. 7: 2-4).

b. *The Philistines*, the oppressors of the Israelites, were originally Phenicians who had settled in the borders of the Nile Delta very early; their descendants spread northward. In the time of Joshua (Josh. 13: 3), they held the land "from Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward." They were a clever and fierce people; they built strongly fortified cities and had ships which they used for commerce and for war. They grew very strong in the latter part of the time of the Judges, even venturing to attack Egypt. Their fleet made a descent upon the great commercial city of Sidon and destroyed its fleet and captured the city. They were strong in chariots and archers. "They are represented on the Egyptian monuments as a beardless people wearing a peculiar kind of cap or tiara."

THE REFORMATION UNDER SAMUEL

During all the years of the oppression under the Philistines we have no doubt, although there is no record (ch. 7: 2, 3), that Samuel was very busy preparing for a reformation of morals and religion and the lifting of the Philistine yoke. He might have organized in this time the schools of the prophets, which afterwards became so famous, and sent the prophets (ch. 10: 5-10; 19: 20) up and down the land to rouse the people from their lethargy and sins.

At length he calls publicly upon all Israel to put away their transgressions, their false gods, and to meet him at Mizpeh for national repentance and turning to Jehovah. The people, now thoroughly aroused, respond to the call of the prophet and entreat him to pray for them. While all Israel is gathered at Mizpeh, the Philistines suddenly attack them, but are driven off with God's help. The Philistine yoke is broken and the cities of the Hebrews restored. Again the lesson is taught that political freedom depends upon allegiance to God (ch. 7:3-14). Samuel is made Judge (ch. 7:15-17).

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM

The Israelites up to the age of Samuel were without a king. In this respect they were totally unlike the surrounding nations. That they had been able to hold together at all and not been swept away argues for the fact of a faithful remnant and the strength of its attachment to the worship of Jehovah.

a. *The immediate cause* of the kingdom was the evil conduct of the sons of Samuel whom he had made Judges over Israel (ch. 8:1-5). The elders of the people felt that some provision for the welfare of the nation must be made before the death of Samuel or they would again be plunged into a period of anarchy.

b. *The Necessity* for a strong government was plain. The only stable organization known to those times was the monarchy. The theocracy had not

failed but the people had failed to appreciate its benefits and were not equal to its lofty conceptions (ch. 8: 7). During the times of the Judges the people had learned their weakness but had not learned to trust God fully; they had come to see, however, that they could never have permanent peace without a united country and a strong hand to bear rule. Some one must gather and hold the scattered tribes. "Material and political means must prepare the way for the spiritual end."

Samuel was displeased at the request of the people for a king but acceded to it when commanded by God (ch. 8: 6-22).

c. *The principle of the kingdom.* The people had asked for a king and God was to give them one, yet he was to be unlike the king of any other nation in that he was not to rule by his own will, the will of the people or for military honor and glory, but by the will of God and under His immediate direction for the good of the people. The king was to be the subject of Jehovah as well as the most humble Israelite. This was an entirely new principle. Hence the Monarchy was no mere political expedient. Saul, when he attempted to assert his own will and disobeyed Jehovah was at once deposed (ch. 13: 8-14; 15: 9-23). David, by closely identifying himself with God and His purposes was the most successful king. Edersheim says, "Saul embodied the royal ideal of the people while David represented the Scriptural idea of royalty in its conscious subjection to the will of God." In the reign of the kings of Israel and Judah this principle

of the necessity of the dependence of the king upon the will of Jehovah is constantly brought to the front: the king who violates it is put off his throne. The prophet, the priest, the king, were instruments of God's will and must strive to be in conformity with Jehovah; this all looked forward to the perfect Prophet, Priest and King who should come in the person of Christ.

Looking back now we can see some of the results: "the great empires Assyria and Egypt, whose armies fought across the body of Israel for world dominion, have crumbled to ruins. The Roman empire, with its iron heel trampled the Jewish nationality to the ground, but there was a vitality which it could not crush." Israel possessed neither the art nor the philosophy of Greece, the science of Egypt, the law of Rome, the force of Assyria or Babylon, yet it has exercised an influence and had a power in the world to which none of these massive empires have attained. The Hebrew nation has outlasted them all, wrought its literature into the literature of the world and made its religion to stand before all others.

THE COURSE OF EVENTS

As they are given in the first book of Samuel. (Although much is said about David in this book, ch. 16-31: 1-3, his life will not be considered until the next lesson.)

a. *The rule of Eli* (ch. 1-3). The life of Eli was cast on a dark background and he died when Israel's fortunes seemed hopelessly lost in the capture of the

Ark by the Philistines. He was High Priest and Judge but, although a good man, was without strength of character and sufficient faith in God to make headway against the evils of the day. Religion was decaying and the nation disintegrating.

Ch. 1-2: 11, 18-21. The evil condition of the age; the birth and youth of Samuel.

Ch. 2: 12-17, 22-25. The wickedness of Eli's sons and his reproof.

Ch. 2: 26-3: 21. The house of Eli rejected; the choice of Samuel.

b. *The rule of Samuel* (ch. 4-12). He was made Judge about 1094 B. C.

NOTE.—If Kamphausen's chronology for the kings of Israel and Judah is followed, Samuel's appointment as Judge took place about the middle of the eleventh century. This is considered the more correct date. Students are advised to consult Kamphausen's Chronological Table given in chapter XI. of this book, and compare the dates given there with those of the common chronology. The former are generally followed by Biblical scholars.

Israel was greatly advanced under Samuel, the evils were put away. "His great work was to bring back the people to their ancient faith" and establish them in it. Moses had been raised up to give the Law, Joshua to lead the people into the promised land, and Samuel was the divinely appointed instrument through which the change was to be made from the theocracy to the kingdom. Usually when a nation makes a change from one form of government to another, no matter how low the government may have sunk, it is through a period of bloodshed and anarchy (such was the case with Rome when

it changed from a republic to an empire, and France when it changed from an empire to a republic). But the change was wrought in Israel by Samuel without civil war or serious trouble.

“He was a sublime figure, in favor both with God and man”; pre-eminently one of the heroes of Hebrew history.

His offices were many and he filled them all with great ability and a simple faith in God.

He was the last of the Judges and the first in the prophetic order which he established. He founded the “school of the prophets” (ch. 10: 10; 19: 18), an institution of immense advantage to Israel. “These prophets were the privy-councillors of kings, the historians of the nation, the instructors of the people; their work was to condemn idolatry in the court, oppression among the nobles, injustice among the judges, formality among the priests.” They interpreted the law and the Divine will and spoke and acted with unflinching courage. It is probable that Samuel, after instructing bands of these prophets, sent them forth, as evangelists are now sent out, among the people to rouse them to a sense of their sins and bring them back to Jehovah.

Ch. 4: 1—compare ch. 3: 19–21. Samuel is fully established as a prophet before the Lord.

Ch. 4: 1–22. Defeat of Israel and capture of the ark by the Philistines. Death of Eli and his sons.

Ch. 5–7: 1. The fortunes of the ark while in the possession of the Philistines.

Ch. 7. The people under the call of Samuel repent

and turn to God at Mizpeh. The Philistines coming up are defeated; the cities of Israel are restored.

Ch. 8. The people ask for a king. Samuel is directed by God to accede to their request.

Ch. 9-11. Saul is anointed king by Samuel. The choice is ratified at Mizpeh.

Ch. 12. Samuel formally lays down his office as Judge. He calls the people to witness to his integrity. He utters words of warning and encouragement.

c. *The rule of Saul*, the first king (ch. 13-31). Saul was a clever man; a great military leader; an able statesman; yet his life was a miserable failure because he tried to put himself in place of God and to carry out his own plans. He was self-willed and disobedient. He failed to see that which he ought to have perceived at once, that this was God's nation and not his own, and that Jehovah had plans which must be carried out. Saul reigned from 1075-1055 B. C. (the 40 years spoken of in Acts 13:21 probably includes Samuel's judgeship with Saul's reign).

"Saul at first seemed to be called to do great things." As the commander of the armies of Israel he was a brilliant success; he chastised the Amorites on the east side of Jordan (ch. 11), the Philistines on the west (ch. 14: 1-20), the Amalekites on the south (ch. 15:1-7), and also on every side he fought against the enemies of the nation (ch. 14:47). Rejecting God (ch. 13:13 and 15:23) he was rejected by God; his end was tragic; he fell by his own hand (ch. 31:4, 5).

Ch. 13-14:46. Saul, fully established as king, leads the people in revolt against the Philistines and defeats them.

Ch. 14:47-52. Summary of Saul's wars and an account of his family.

Ch. 15. See also ch. 13:13. Saul for disobedience has the kingdom rent from him.

Ch. 16-30. Decline of Saul and rise of David.

Ch. 31. Death of Saul's sons and suicide of Saul.

NEW INSTITUTIONS

"Jewish history differs from ordinary history in its *subject*, because it is the history of the special training and discipline of God's chosen people. In its *method*, because it is a history of facts as God sees them referred to their true center in Him."

a. *The monarchy* was a new institution to the Israelites and differed from all other monarchies in the principle upon which it was founded: that the king reigned by the will of God and under His direction; he, the king, was always to seek to do the will of God. The Israelitish nation might have been given a king in time by Jehovah but not a king after their ideal to be like the nations round about them. "The monarchy thus constituted preserved the existence of the nation, foreshadowed the kingdom of the Messiah and witnessed the reality of the Divine government."

This period contributed to the Messianic expectation in that the thoughts of the people were turned to the hope of a king who would reign in righteous-

ness and whose dominion should be universal. This was a step in advance of the law which had pointed "to one who should be at once priest and victim, and make atonement for the sin of man."

b. *The prophetic order.* This was closely connected with the monarchy and was founded by Samuel, who did great service with it in his day. Its value to Israel cannot be overestimated. From Samuel to Malachi there was a regular succession of prophets who ceased not to exhort, to warn and to strive to have Israel conformed to the will of God.

QUESTIONS

What is the connection between Judges and Samuel? What can be said of the conditions of the times; the state of Israel; the Philistines? What was the reformation under Samuel? What can be said of the establishment of the kingdom; the immediate cause; the necessity; the principle? What is the course of events; the rule of Eli; of Samuel; of Saul? New institutions; how does Jewish history differ in subject and in method from other histories; what can be said of the principle of the monarchy; the Messianic expectation; the prophetic order?

X

THE GLORY OF THE KINGDOM

*Scripture: 1 Samuel 16: 13-2 Samuel-1 Kings 11. See also
1 Chronicles 11: 1-2 Chronicles 9: 31*

INTRODUCTION

We consider in this chapter the culminating period in the greatness of the kingdom of Israel in the reigns of David and Solomon.

“The century which intervened between the accession of Saul and the death of Solomon was one of unparalleled development for the Israelites; within three generations the kingdom had been born, reached its greatness and begun to decline.” The tribal organizations gave way to a national one and the worship was transferred from many places and concentrated in Jerusalem.

The narrative in 2 Samuel follows at once upon that of 1 Samuel without any break. After the defeat of Saul at Gilboa the country was demoralized. Upon that day occurred the death of the king, his three sons, nearly all his body guard and the flower of the youth of Israel. David, although anointed king by Samuel in place of Saul, was uncertain what course to pursue and remained at

Ziklag. He mourned sincerely for Saul (2 Sam. 1), for while he lived he was his king and the Lord's anointed. David, on account of his actions with Achish, was not as popular as he had been, and the people did not at once turn to him in their extremity. He went, after inquiring of the Lord, to Hebron (2 Sam. 2:1, 2) where he was anointed king over Judah (2 Sam. 2:4) and reigned for seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11). Saul's son, Ishbosheth, was made king over Israel at Mahanaim; Abner, the chief of Saul's forces, loyally supporting him and gradually winning back his territory from the Philistines. At length civil war broke out between the houses of Saul and David; this lasted for a long time (2 Sam. 2:12-3:1). The house of Saul was worsted in this contest. At length negotiations were begun which resulted in the union of the two parts of the kingdom under David, who proceeded at once to capture Jerusalem and make it his capital (2 Sam. 3:12-5:10); here he reigned for thirty-three years. Solomon succeeded David (1 Kings 1) and reigned for forty years (1 Kings 11:42).

COURSE OF EVENTS

By books and chapters.

a. *The life of David before he became king* is related in 1 Samuel 16: 11-31: 13 and is intermingled with that of Saul in his declining days. His father's name was Jesse. He was the youngest child and his birthplace was Bethlehem.

1. David's life at home and at the court of Saul

(1 Sam. 16: 11-20: 42). We have here a series of vivid pictures of the early career of the great king. He was trained in a hard school, for as a shepherd he had to defend his flock from the wild beasts. Going on a visit to the army of Saul he had a duel with the giant Goliath; in this fight he showed his trust in God, in that he fought the giant in the name of Jehovah and not in his own strength. Called to the court of Saul the king through jealousy sought to take his life.

2. David as an outlaw (1 Sam. 21: 1-31: 13). Convinced that Saul intended to kill him, David was compelled to flee; at first he sought a refuge within the kingdom, but finding this impossible he went to Achish, king of Gath. Here finding himself in imminent danger, he feigned madness (ch. 21: 13). Escaping from Achish he came to the cave of Adullam (ch. 22: 1) where many men gathered around him. Finally after a number of perilous adventures he made his headquarters at Ziklag (1 Sam. 27: 5, 6) where he remained until the death of Saul.

In these days of trial, David's faith was put to a severe test. He knew himself to be the anointed king of Israel, yet in reality he was an outcast with every man's hand against him and hunted like a partridge on the mountains. Although Saul was in his power (1 Sam. 26) more than once, yet David refrained from killing him. But this period of hard things was not without its usefulness. Many good lessons were learned, David's faith was strengthened, his knowledge of men was increased, and from seeing

all sorts of life he was better able to govern when he came to the throne.

b. *David's life after he became king* (1055-1015 B. C. common chronology) is related in 2 Samuel 1-24; 1 Kings 1-2: 10.

It is divided into two parts.

1. His reign over Judah (2 Sam. 1-4) at Hebron for seven and a half years. We know little or nothing about the first five years of this period. Ishbosheth, Saul's son, reigned over Israel at Mahanaim. It was not until Abner had driven back the Philistines that the two parts of the kingdom came into conflict; this contact led to negotiations which resulted in making David king over Israel and Judah.

2. *His reign over the united kingdom* (2 Sam. 5-24) at Jerusalem (ch. 5) for thirty-three years. His first act was to bring back the ark and place it in his capital city (ch. 6), and to honor it in every way. He extended his foreign conquests over Philistia, Moab and Ammon (ch. 8-10), but at the height of his glory and power committed a sin in the matter of Bathsheba (ch. 11) which darkened his whole after life. David repented sincerely of this sin (ch. 12) and was forgiven by God. Yet the consequences of David's sin showed themselves in Ammon (ch. 13, 14), and finally led to the rebellion of Absalom and the temporary driving of David from his throne (ch. 15-18). David is restored to his kingdom (ch. 19, 20) and in a wonderful psalm of thanksgiving and in his last words shows how he loves and honors God

(ch. 22, 23). David again sins, a plague is sent, but on his repentance the plague is stayed. His last days and death are recorded in 1 Kings 1: 1-2: 11.

c. *The reign of Solomon* (1015-975 B. C.) is set forth in 1 Kings 1-11. He immediately succeeded David and sat on the throne for forty years (1 Kings 11: 42). He was the son of David and Bathsheba. Of the eleven chapters devoted to the reign of Solomon, four (ch. 5-8) are given to the preparation for the temple, its erection and dedication. If, however, we take out the first and part of the second chapters, which relate to the close of David's life, we have left not seven but only five and one-half chapters which exploit the rule of Solomon, his greatness, wisdom, riches and splendor. Solomon went sadly astray at last. He lacked the faith and steadfast character of his father. He lost part of his inherited dominion and the Lord revealed to him hard things in store for the kingdom on account of his sins (ch. 11).

THE WORK OF KING DAVID

When David began to reign at Hebron, he found no easy task before him; the nation was disorganized, the tribes were jealous of each other, the country was overrun with insolent and victorious enemies, the people were discouraged and hard to be won over to the undertaking of any forward movement.

In a few years he had consolidated the tribes into one nation, subdued the enemies of Israel round about, giving room for the expansion of the nation,

and united in perfect harmony the secular and religious interests.

When David died, he ruled "from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates: from Gaza on the west to Thapsacus on the east, and from all the subject peoples in this vast empire a yearly tribute was exacted."

a. *As a military leader*, David displayed talents of the first order in the art of organizing an army and leading it to victory. 1 Chron. 27: 1-15; 2 Sam. 23: 8-39. He made successful expeditions against the Philistines on the west, the Moabites on the east, the Syrians on the northeast as far as the Euphrates, the Edomites on the south and also the Ammonites.

b. *As a statesman* he knew how to govern wisely and well not only his own people, but also the conquered nations. There were civil officers who were charged with the administration of the affairs of the kingdom so that all things were done in an orderly way. 2 Sam. 8: 16-18; 20: 23-26.

c. *As a servant of God* he was pre-eminent; he felt that he owed all to God and that he was ruling for Him and under His guidance. He fell into sin. His life was not stainless and the narrative fully sets forth the terrible character of his faults, but David's glory is that he repented of his sins and sought forgiveness for them. It was his desire to do the will of God and do it fully. He brought the ark to Jerusalem, and he would have built the temple, which was afterwards erected by Solomon his son, had he been permitted to do so. The key-note of David's life is in what he said to Goliath, "Thou comest to me with

a sword and with a spear and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." 1 Sam. 17: 45.

d. *As a poet and musician.* The Psalms of David sound the whole gamut of human experience; other poets are local, national, have their day and then pass gradually out of human experience and life, but the songs of the sweet singer of Israel are international and for all time. These psalms were born out of the heart of a strong man, who was often tried unto the utmost, and appeal to all strong natures.

THE WORK OF KING SOLOMON

Solomon began his reign when Israel was at her highest point of greatness. His intentions at first seem to have been of the best. He immediately set about the work of building a great temple for the service of Jehovah. Vast sums of money were lavished upon this building. He humbly asked God for wisdom. But his heart seems to have been seduced by the glitter and splendour of his building, his equipage and the trappings of his court; he made entangling alliances and married strange wives who led him away from his father's God. (1 Kings 11: 1-8.) In his best days he clung to God, he composed proverbs, he was known for his wise decisions, but in his later days he fell away and forgot God. He inclined to despotism and sought to reign after the manner of oriental kings. He fortified cities and increased the garrisons in them, but to little purpose, for the Lord had departed from him.

When Solomon died, the kingdom was already on the decline.

a. *With foreign nations*, Solomon sought to enter into alliances. He married the daughter of Pharaoh, he made a treaty with Hiram, king of Tyre. In fact his policy was not to keep Israel as a unique nation standing for definite principles and a religion superior to all others, but rather to level its peculiar institutions down until they were on a plane with those of other nations. Entering into treaties with foreign nations brought in their gods, and not content with this Solomon himself built "an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon." 1 Kings 11: 7. We mark the deterioration in the character of Solomon as he enters upon this degrading policy. This is not the same man whom we saw asking wisdom of God or even the man whom the Queen of Sheba came to visit. In consequence of this policy, successful standards of revolt were raised in the north by Rezon, who became master of Damascus, and in the south by Hadad in Edom.

His ships built on the shores of the Red Sea (1 Kings 9: 26-28) "came to Ophir and fetched from thence gold." It is very evident from the history that the commercial relations with distant countries were very active; the visit of the Queen of Sheba might have had among other objects the opening up of new trade relations.

b. *At home*. The taxes were increased in order to support the luxury of the court and the expenses of

the buildings; more and more as Solomon developed his policy to reign as an oriental despot the people lost the old freedom and felt the hardness of the yoke of the taskmaster.

c. *In religious matters*, the magnificent temple, the gorgeous ritual, the chanting priests, the throngs of worshipers, impressed the imagination and carried an appearance of great devoutness on the part of king and people. Undoubtedly when the temple was dedicated there was a reality and genuineness in the worship of Jehovah on the part of the whole nation, but gradually there seems to come a tendency to let ritualism take the place of real religion, or else Solomon would never have built temples to other gods in his later days.

God plainly showed Solomon that He cared more for righteousness and obedience than He did for all the magnificence of his court and temple. 1 Kings 11: 9-11.

CONDITION OF THE SURROUNDING NATIONS

We can understand this age better when we are acquainted with the political and religious situation of the peoples with which Israel had to deal.

a. *Political*. The progress of the kingdom was greatly forwarded by the weak state into which the mighty empires around Israel had fallen. God seems indeed to have laid a quieting hand upon them in order to develop the Hebrew monarchy.

Egypt under the contention of rival dynasties had become greatly weakened and, unable to be at peace

within her own borders, was in no condition to undertake a foreign conquest or any warlike expedition.

Assyria had sunk so low after the death of Tiglath-pileser I. that the inscriptions almost cease; it did not revive until sometime in the ninth century B. C.

The Hittites, formerly a great power, were now so weakened by their wars that they were practically helpless.

Thus the stage of action was divinely cleared so that the Hebrew nation could complete, without the rivalry of the mighty nations, its conquest of the Canaanitish world; a campaign begun by Joshua and completed by David. God showed how He fulfilled His promise to give this land to the Hebrew people.

b. *Religious.* The awful immorality and brutality of the religion of the Canaanites and other nations must always be kept in mind in order to understand the insistence of the Divine commands to have nothing to do with it. "Baal and Ashera were symbols of the quickening and producing powers of nature"; their worship was accompanied with unbounded licentiousness and awful impurities. The "Groves" so frequently mentioned in Scripture were places of immorality too gross to be described; when they flourished it denoted degradation of men and women to the lowest point. But from this awful sensuality after a time men's natures revolted and they sought to atone for their sin by crying and cutting themselves, mutilating their bodies in the most horrible ways; not only this but they sought pardon for their sins by offering human sacrifices, giving up their chil-

dren for this purpose. Molech, for whom Solomon built a high place (2 Kings 11:7) when he fell away from God, is thus described by the Rabbis: "his image was a human seated figure with a bull's head and outstretched arms and hands; this image was made of metal with furnace beneath; the image was heated by a fire built in the furnace. Mothers placed their children in the outstretched hands, they rolled off into the fiery lap and so were burned to death; the cries of the children were drowned by the noise of flutes and loudly beaten drums."

Jehovah was, in the Israelites, bringing up a people not only to form a new nation but to make an organized protest against these awful practices and to bring in a pure religion founded on love to God and purity of life.

SOME BENEFITS OF THIS AGE

a. *The uniting of the nation under one head* and the consolidation of the tribal organizations. The people were made to feel, in the greatness of the kingdom under David, that God had not forgotten them but had remembered His promises; they were led to look forward with Messianic hope to Christ as the King who should rule over all nations.

b. *The building of the temple at Jerusalem* and the concentration of the worship in one place looked forward to the worship of the Messiah and the time when all peoples should bow to Him.

c. *The rise of the prophetic order* and the perfecting of the priestly functions looked forward to the

perfect prophet, the Christ who should fully reveal the word of God.

d. *The rise of the wisdom literature* of which we have examples in the Proverbs of Solomon.

e. *The development of sacred song.*

f. *The deepening of the sense of dependence on God.* David, the greatest king of Israel, was most loyal to God and the quickest to do His will. The people were made to feel as they studied the signs of the times that their prosperity and advancement depended on doing God's will.

QUESTIONS

Give the characteristics of this period and the story in brief as set forth in the introduction. Give the course of events. What can be said of the life of David before he became king; at home and at the court of Saul; as an outlaw? How long did he reign in Hebron, in Jerusalem, and what can be said of his rule? What can be said of the reign of Solomon? What was the work of king David; how did he find and how did he leave the kingdom? As a military leader, as a statesman, as a servant of God, as a poet and musician? What was the work of king Solomon; how did he find and how did he leave the kingdom? What can be said of Solomon's relations with foreign nations, his home relations, his religious tendencies? What was the condition of the surrounding nations, political and religious? Mention some benefits of this age.

XI

THE DIVISION AND FALL OF THE KINGDOM

Scripture: 1 Kings 12: 1-2 Kings 1-25-2 Chronicles

10: 1-36: 21

THE DISRUPTION

After the death of Solomon, the splendid empire which seemed so well established and magnificent was split into two parts. This took place according to the common chronology* (which we follow here for convenience sake) in the year 975 B. C. This division showed weakness and was a great calamity. Not only were there now two kingdoms, with separate kings and increased taxes, to support, but the mutual jealousies and misunderstandings were sources of constant trouble which prevented growth and development. We have come to sad times in the history of this people. The humbling of the pride of this nation was necessary. As a united nation, strong in material resources, Israel forgot her mis-

*NOTE.—For the chronology which is generally followed by Biblical Scholars at the present day, see Kamphausen's Chronological Table near the close of this lesson.

sion to stand for righteousness as Jehovah's people; she did not convert the nations round about to the true worship of God but rather by her entangling alliances and worldly wealth was being turned to the idolatrous practices and worship of the heathen. Solomon "did build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon." 1 Kings 11: 7. If Israel was to be saved she must be turned back to God and led to see that the source of her strength was in Him.

CAUSES OF THE DIVISION

a. *First causes.* The sins of the people (1 Kings 11: 33) in forsaking God and turning to the abominable idolatries of the Zidonians and Moabites. All this was foretold by Ahijah the prophet. 1 Kings 11: 29-39. Solomon had no little share in this by sinning himself and causing the people to sin. When the adherence of the people to Jehovah was weakened, the ancient jealousy of Ephraim against Judah came to the front. The people were restless under the taxes, which had grown to be very oppressive.

"The greatness of the historian of the Kings consists in his firm grasp of the principle that God is the controlling power and sin the disturbing force in the entire history of men and nations."

b. *Second causes.* The attitude of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, and his advisers. 1 Kings 12. When the children of Israel asked him, after they

had come to Shechem to make him king, if he would make their burdens lighter, he replied, upon due deliberation, that "now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." 1 Kings 12: 11. This was spoken after the manner of an oriental despot and not after the way of a king under the immediate guidance of God, as his grandfather David had been. Rehoboam had inherited a great kingdom with magnificent possibilities. Jerusalem was a glorious city with splendid palaces; the temple which had been built at an immense cost was one of the finest buildings of ancient times. With a united people back of these worldly advantages and devoted to the service of God, a great career lay open to Rehoboam, but he flung it all away. When the cry rang out: "To your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David" (1 Kings 12: 16), the division of the kingdom was completed and the sad history begun.

CONDITION OF THE TWO KINGDOMS

a. *The northern kingdom* had many advantages over the southern from a material point of view; in area it was larger and more fertile; in population it outnumbered Judah nearly three to one; in military matters it was in every way superior. "The schools of the prophets were there—Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal. The principal scenes of the prophetic activity were there—Iddo, Amos, Micaiah, Jonah, Hosea, Elijah and Elisha all ministered there." The cause of

Israel was just. Why then did it not prosper? We have but to look at the men who were at the head of affairs to have that question answered. The kings desired to reign after their own wills and to serve heathen deities instead of God.

Jeroboam, immediately upon his accession to the throne, set up calf worship at Dan and Bethel for fear that the people would be estranged from him and so return to their allegiance to the house of David. 1 Kings 12: 26-33. He was warned against the evil of his way (1 Kings 13: 1-6), but he afterwards returned to it. He made Israel to sin and this more than counterbalanced all the material advantages.

2. *The southern kingdom*, while it had a smaller population, a less fertile soil and a poorer military equipment, yet possessed the political and religious capital of the nation. When Jeroboam set up his calf worship in Israel, it led the priests, Levites and many who were strong in their adherence to Jehovah to forsake the northern kingdom and transfer their interests and allegiance to Judah. This immigration for conscience sake strengthened the southern kingdom. A comparison of the kings is greatly to Judah's advantage.

The northern kingdom had nineteen kings and nine dynasties.

The southern kingdom had twenty kings and but one dynasty (showing how God fulfilled His promise to David that his descendants should inherit his throne).

The southern kingdom, stronger in spiritual power, outlasted the northern kingdom by about one hundred and thirty years.

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE KINGDOMS

“There are four clearly defined epochs:

“a. *Mutual hostility* during which the kings of Judah persist in the hope of regaining their authority over the ten tribes, and for nearly sixty years there is constant war.

“b. *Close alliance and united hostility to Syria.* The northern kingdom declines into Baalism under Ahab, who cements by intermarriage an alliance between his own family and that of Jehoshaphat, probably with a view to more effectual resistance to the encroaching power of Syria.

“c. *Fresh animosity and the gradual decline of both kingdoms before the advancing power of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires.* Jehu comes to the throne of Israel and exterminates the house of Ahab, thus shattering the alliance between the two kingdoms. The breach is never healed. The northern kingdom, in spite of the exhortations of numerous prophets, falls more and more into idolatry and is punished by the incursions of the Syrians; it is finally carried into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B. C.

“d. *Struggle for national existence on the part of Judah against Assyria and Egypt alternately, and afterwards against the Chaldeans.* This continues for about one hundred and thirty years, or till about

586 B. C., when the southern kingdom is taken into captivity by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar." Oxford Helps to the Study of the Bible, p. 86.

THE PROPHETS

Who played such an important part and did so great a work will be considered in the next lesson.

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL

1. *Jeroboam*, 975-954 B. C. 1 Kings 12:20-14:20. Immediately upon the decision of Rehoboam to lay heavier burdens upon Israel than his father Solomon had imposed, the ten tribes revolted and chose Jeroboam to be king. No man ever had fairer prospects, for his cause was just and sanctioned by God. Rehoboam was restrained from attacking him. But he began at once a civil and religious policy which drew him and his people farther and farther away from God. He instituted calf worship at Dan and Bethel. He was warned by a prophet not to persist in his iniquitous worship, but he would not desist. He made Israel to sin.

2. *Nadab*, 954-953 B. C. 1 Kings 15:25-27. A son of Jeroboam. He did evil as his father did before him. Baasha conspired against him and slew him. Thus the word of Ahijah, the prophet, against the house of Jeroboam was fulfilled. 1 Kings 14:6-15.

3. *Baasha*, 953-930 B. C. 1 Kings 15:27-16:6. He was no reformer, but helped Israel on in her evil course. He warred with Judah during all his reign.

4. *Elah*, 930-929 B. C. 1 Kings 16:6-10. The son of Baasha. Another evil king who was assassinated by Zimri, a captain of his chariots.

5. *Zimri*, 929 B. C. 1 Kings 16:11-20. A usurper who reigned but seven days. On the approach of Omri with the army, he burned the king's palace over his head and so died.

6. *Omri*, 929-918 B. C. 1 Kings 16:16-28. He was made king by Israel when Zimri slew king Elah. Tibni contended with him for the kingdom, but was finally conquered. He made Samaria his capital. He encouraged idolatry. Micah 6: 16.

7. *Ahab*, 918-898 B. C. 1 Kings 16:29-22:40. The son of Omri. The record of this king is the most interesting of all the kings. It is told in a very graphic way. We here meet with the great prophet, Elijah. Almost the first act of Ahab was to marry the strong-minded, evil, idolatrous woman, Jezebel. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and wrought untold horrors in Israel and Judah. She influenced Ahab in the worst ways. A zealot in setting up idols and the abominations of the Zidonians, she persecuted the adherents of Jehovah to the bitter end. When the worshipers of Jehovah were all either killed or in hiding and Baal worship decidedly in the ascendant, Elijah suddenly appears upon the scene; he declares that God will send a three years drought upon the land for the sins of the people. Elijah withdraws himself to appear at the end of three years with a challenge to the priests of Baal for a trial to see whose God will answer by fire. Elijah

is victorious and the priests of Baal are destroyed. He predicts the breaking of the drought. The worship of Jehovah is once more in the ascendant. But Jezebel, unconvinced, seeks the life of Elijah. The prophet at first flees, but is brought back by God. Elijah again finds Ahab and denounces him and Jezebel (1 Kings 21:17-29). The prophecy against Jezebel was fulfilled in the time of Jehu. Ahab repents at the preaching of Elijah and God accepts his repentance. Ahab conducts three campaigns against the Syrians: two defensive in which he is helped by God and one offensive in which he is not helped and loses his life.

8. *Ahaziah*, 898-896 B. C. 1 Kings 22:51-2 Kings 1:18. Son of Ahab, a weak and idolatrous king; his death is predicted by Elijah. About this time or a little later, Elijah was translated to heaven and Elisha took his place.

9. *Jehoram*, 896-884 B. C. 2 Kings 3:1-9:24. Brother of Ahaziah and son of Ahab. Elisha, the successor of Elijah, now appears upon the scene. While in general the king is guided by him, "yet he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord." He engaged in a war against Moab, and in three Syrian wars. The last Syrian war seems not to have had the sanction of the prophet and was disastrous. Jehoram was wounded and returned to Jezreel. Elisha performs a number of notable miracles through the power of God. Naaman, the Syrian captain, is healed of his leprosy; the Shunammite's son is raised from the dead; the Syrian army is smitten with blindness. The

king Mesha of Moab with whom Jehoram warred is believed to be the one who set up the now famous Moabite stone.

10. *Jehu*, 884-856 B. C. 2 Kings 9:1-10:36. He was anointed king by one of the prophets (appointed by Elisha) to execute vengeance upon the wicked house of Ahab. He proved to be a terrible and bloody reformer and more than lived up to his commission. He killed king Jehoram and also Ahaziah, king of Judah, who happened to be with Jehoram at Jezreel. He commanded the wicked queen Jezebel to be thrown out of a window into the street, where she was trampled upon and eaten by dogs. He caused the seventy sons of Ahab to be put to death and also the brethren or relations of king Ahaziah. But while thus doing this outward terrible work which seems to have been in accord with his hard nature, he seems to have had no real desire to restore or help the moral and spiritual condition of Israel. He is the first king of Israel mentioned on the monuments (so far found). His name appears upon the famous black obelisk of Shalmaneser II., where he inscribed his Syrian victories. Jehu is represented giving tribute. This obelisk was found at Nimroud by Mr. Layard.

11. *Jehoahaz*, 856-841 B. C. 2 Kings 13:1-9. The son of Jehu, a weak king under whom the bad conditions of the kingdom grew worse. He was delivered into the hands of Hazael, king of Syria, but upon his repentance a deliverer was raised up who lifted the Syrian yoke.

12. *Jehoash*, 841-825 B. C. 2 Kings 13: 10-14: 16. Son of Jehoahaz. A more creditable ruler; he consulted the great prophet, Elisha, and turned the tide of Syrian conquest. He fought with Amaziah, king of Judah, and conquered him.

13. *Jeroboam II.*, 825-784 or 773. 2 Kings 14: 23-29.

He brought the nation temporary prosperity and enlargement of borders. It was God's last trial of Israel; but the moral decadence had gone very far. This king also sinned against God. Hosea, Amos and Jonah prophesied in this king's reign.

14. *Zechariah*, 773-772 B. C. 2 Kings 15: 8-10. Son of Jeroboam II. A weak king who did evil. After a six months reign he was slain by Shallum, who conspired against him.

15. *Shallum*, 772 B. C. 2 Kings 15: 13, 14. He reigned but one month when he was killed by Menahem.

16. *Menahem*, 772-761 B. C. 2 Kings 15: 14-22. An evil man and a usurper of the throne. Pul, the king of Assyria, came up against him and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver. This fact is confirmed by the Assyrian monuments.

17. *Pekahiah*, 761-759 B. C. 2 Kings 15: 23-26. Son of Menahem. He did evil also and was killed by Pekah, one of his captains.

18. *Pekah*, 759-739 or 730 B. C. 2 Kings 15: 27-16: 9. He also sinned and led Israel into sin. He formed an alliance with Rezin, king of Damascus, against Ahaz, king of Judah. They attacked Judah but Ahaz

sent to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, for help. When the king of Assyria came, he took Damascus and slew Rezin; he also wrought havoc in Israel. Tiglath-pileser caused a record to be made of this expedition, which record we have. Pekah was killed by Hoshea. 2 Kings 15: 30.

19. *Hoshea*, 730-722 B. C. 2 Kings 17: 1-6. He was not quite as evil as the kings who went before him, but the cup of iniquity of Israel was full and the time of her bondage had come. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, subdued Hoshea and put him under tribute. He attempted to escape from this tribute and to enter into an alliance with the king of Egypt. Shalmaneser, upon the discovery of this attempt to enter into relations with Egypt on the part of Hoshea, came up and besieged Samaria. Taking it, he carried away Israel into captivity. The Assyrian records declare that Sargon, who succeeded Shalmaneser, finally took the city of Samaria.

This is a sad record of kings who did evil. The constant refrain of the historian is, of king after king, "He cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

Israel now disappears from history; she sinned away her day of grace.

THE KINGS OF JUDAH

1. *Rehoboam*, 975-957 B. C. 1 Kings 12: 21-24; 14: 21-31; 2 Chron. 11: 1-12: 16. The son of Solomon. After the foolish answer of Rehoboam to the ten tribes and the revolt which took place in consequence,

he raised a large army to reconquer Israel, but in this he was prevented by the word of God. When he was fully established in his kingdom, "he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him." Because of this transgression Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against him and "took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house." Then Rehoboam humbled himself before the Lord and was not wholly delivered into the hand of Shishak. There was a bitter rivalry between Israel and Judah all the days of Rehoboam. The Scripture account of this invasion of Shishak is confirmed by the Egyptian record and sculptured figures upon "the walls of the great temple of Karnak."

2. *Abijah* or *Abijam*, 957-955 B. C. 1 Kings 15: 1-8; 2 Chron. 13: 1-22. Son of Rehoboam. "His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God." This king, not being prevented by the word of God, attempted to conquer Israel at Mt. Zemeraim, south of Bethel. He and his army were caught in an ambushade but upon an entreaty to Jehovah he was delivered. He took a number of Israelitish cities but was unable to subdue the revolted tribes.

3. *Asa* 955-914 B. C. 1 Kings 15: 9-24; 2 Chron. 14: 1-16: 14. Son of Abijah. "He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord." He took away the "high places," he suppressed idolatry and was zealous for the worship of Jehovah. He strengthened his army and his kingdom. Zerah, the Ethiopian, led up a great army against Judah: Asa and the people call upon God and win a notable victory: they thank God and

make a solemn covenant with Him. The land had peace and prosperity for many years. Near the close of his long reign King Asa made two bad mistakes: in a war with Baasha, king of Israel, he sought the help of the Syrians instead of that of God; being rebuked by the prophet Hanani, he put him in prison; again, being sick, he did not seek the aid of Jehovah, and died.

4. *Jehoshaphat*, 914-893 B. C. 1 Kings 15: 24 and 22: 41-50; 2 Kings 3: 1-27; 2 Chron. 17: 1-21: 1. Son of Asa. He took up the cause of reform which had suffered a relapse during the last days of Asa. This reform was instituted along three lines: educational or religious, judicial, and military. Teachers of God's word were sent throughout the kingdom. "And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat" and prospered him because he served Him as did his father David. In an evil hour, however, he entered into an alliance with Ahab, king of Israel, and married Jehoram, his son, to Athaliah, Ahab's daughter. Jehoshaphat joined Ahab in an expedition against the Syrians at Ramoth-gilead from which he barely escaped with his life. A confederacy being formed against Judah by the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Chron. 20), Jehoshaphat calls upon Jehovah and obtains a signal deliverance. In 2 Kings 3 there is also another account of a victory over the Moabites. The now celebrated Moabite stone gives an independent account of the contact of the Jews with the Moabites.

5. *Jehoram*, 893-885 B. C. 2 Kings 8: 16-24 2 Chron. 21: 1-20. Son of Jehoshaphat. He married

Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and did evil in the sight of the Lord and made Judah to sin. He began his reign with a horrible act of cruelty in the killing of his brothers. He led the nation into idolatry. The Edomites, Arabians and Philistines revolted. He died of an awful disease. The customary funeral ceremonies were not observed and he was not buried in the sepulchres of the kings.

6. *Ahaziah*, 885-884 B. C. 2 Kings 8: 25-29; 9: 27-29; 2 Chron. 22: 1-9. Son of Jehoram. He walked in the ways of the house of Ahab. His own mother counselled him to do wrong. His alliance with the king of Israel resulted disastrously. He was slain by Jehu the Israelitish reformer.

7. *Athaliah*, 884-878 B. C. 2 Kings 11: 1-21; 2 Chron. 22: 10-23: 21. Widow of Jehoram and mother of Ahaziah, daughter of Jezebel and Ahab, an unscrupulous and idolatrous woman. When Ahaziah was killed she killed all the royal seed (as she supposed) and usurped the throne. Joash, however, was hid by Jehosheba his aunt. When he was seven years old he was presented to the people as king and Athaliah was slain.

8. *Joash*, 878-840 B. C. 2 Kings 22: 2-12: 21; 2 Chron. 24: 1-27. Son of Ahaziah. He was presented to the people by Jehoiada the high priest and reigned after Athaliah was killed. Under the tutelage of Jehoiada he did well, instituted many reforms and restored the temple. After the death of Jehoiada he fell away to idolatry; being rebuked by Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, he caused him to be slain. His king-

dom is spoiled by the Syrians and he is afterwards assassinated.

9. *Amaziah*, 840-811 B. C. 2 Kings 14: 1-20; 2 Chron. 25: 1-28. Son of Joash. He began to serve God and then fell away. He undertook a successful expedition against the Edomites; this so greatly elated him that he brought back the gods of Edom and worshiped them; not content, he sent a challenge to the king of Israel to meet him in battle; here he suffered a great defeat. He was finally assassinated by conspirators from Jerusalem.

10. *Uzziah* or *Azariah*, 811-742 B. C. 2 Kings 14: 21-25; 2 Chron. 26: 1-23. Son of Amaziah. He at first served God with his heart. He was successful against the Philistines, the Arabians and the Ammonites. He built fortifications and encouraged husbandry; but when he became strong "his heart was lifted up to his destruction, he transgressed against the Lord his God." He attempted to burn incense before God and to take upon himself the office of priest and he was struck with leprosy.

11. *Jotham*, 742-735 B. C. 2 Kings 15: 32-36; 2 Chron. 27: 1-9. Son of Uzziah. He seems to have reigned fairly well, but Judah is now on the downward road. He strengthened the fortifications. He subdued the Ammonites. He served the Lord, but the idolatrous high places remained. Isaiah, Hosea, Micah and Nahum prophesied during this period.

12. *Ahaz*, 735-726 B. C. 2 Kings 16: 1-20; 2 Chron. 28: 1-27. Son of Jotham. He not only did not serve God but advocated the worship of Baal. He

followed the example of the worst kings. The temple of Jehovah was closed. He offered human sacrifices and went from bad to worse. An alliance was formed against him by Israel and Syria which resulted in an awful slaughter of 120,000, 200,000 captives being taken. An attempt was made to seat one Ben Tabeal on the throne. In his extremity Ahaz sought help of the Assyrians. Isaiah, the prophet, warned him against this, but he persisted, with dire consequences to Judah and Israel. The king of Assyria, Tiglath-pileser II., left an account of his transactions with Ahaz on the stone tablets at Nineveh.

13. *Hezekiah*, 726-697 B. C. 2 Kings 18:1-20:21; 2 Chron. 29:1-32:33. Son of Ahaz, a good son of a bad father. He immediately set about a religious revival. He cleansed the temple and restored the worship of Jehovah. He destroyed the groves and idolatrous images. The Passover is revived. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, made an expedition against Hezekiah. The king sent him a large tribute, but in spite of this Sennacherib demanded the surrender of the city. Encouraged by the prophet Isaiah, Hezekiah refused, and the Lord gave him a signal deliverance in the destruction of Sennacherib's army. Hezekiah was one of Judah's best kings.

14. *Manasseh*, 697-642 B. C. 2 Kings 21:1-18; 2 Chron. 33:1-20. Son of Hezekiah. He brought back the idolatrous worship; he sinned himself and made Judah to sin. At length the Lord brought up the Assyrians against him. He was taken captive to Babylon. He repented and entreated God and was

restored to his throne. He renounced idolatry and worshiped Jehovah.

15. *Amon*, 642-640 B. C. 2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chron. 33:20-25. Son of Manasseh. Another evil king; he was assassinated. (For a picture of these times see *Zephaniah*.)

16. *Josiah*, 640-609 B. C. 2 Kings 22:1-23; 2 Chron. 34:1-35:27. Son of Amon. He sought the Lord with all his heart. He took away the idolatrous places; he renovated and repaired the temple. The book of the law was found and read; a solemn Pass-over was kept. Josiah met his death in going against Pharaoh Necho when the Egyptian king and his host were going up to battle with the new Babylonian power.

17. *Jehoahaz*, 609 B. C. 2 Kings 23:30-34; 2 Chron. 36:1-4. Son of Josiah, he reigned but three months, did evil and was deposed by Pharaoh Necho. He was carried into Egypt, where he died.

18. *Jehoiachim*, 608-597 B. C. 2 Kings 23:34-24:6; 2 Chron. 36:4-8. Son of Josiah. He was placed upon the throne by Pharaoh Necho. An evil king. Nebuchadnezzar, when the Egyptian power waned, came up against Jerusalem and took it. He bound Jehoiachim in fetters to carry him to Babylon.

19. *Jehoiachin*, 597 B. C. 2 Kings 24:6-16; 2 Chron. 36:9, 10. Son of Jehoiachim. He reigned but little over three months and did evil. Nebuchadnezzar came up against him, took Jerusalem and carried away to Babylon all the treasures of the city and temple; he also took into captivity the court, its

officers, the craftsmen, leaving only the poorest to inhabit the land.

20. *Zedekiah*, 597–586 B. C. 2 Kings 24:17–25; 2 Chron. 36:11–21. Son of Josiah. He was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar. “He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord.” Hence there came up the host of Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed the city, burning the temple, raising the wall of Jerusalem and casting down the palaces and houses. The vessels of the temple were taken with large numbers of captives to Babylon. Thus the kingdom of Judah went into captivity.

Unlike the kingdom of Israel which went down not to rise again, the prophets predicted a return from the captivity for Judah and a new career along spiritual lines, and that in time there should come a king out of Judah who should more than restore her great glory. This was the Messianic expectation to be fulfilled in Christ.

THE CHRONOLOGY

The following table gives a chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah, which is followed with slight variations by many Biblical scholars of the present day.

Saul reigned,		1037–1018 B. C.
David reigned in Judah, while Ishbosheth		
had rule over Israel,		1017–1011 B. C.
David,		1010–978 B. C.
Solomon,		977–938 B. C.

KINGS OF JUDAH		KINGS OF ISRAEL	
Rehoboam,	937-921	Jeroboam,	937-916
Abijah,	920-918	Nadab,	915-914
Asa,	917-877	Baasha,	914-891
		Ela,	891-890
		Zimri,	890
		Omri,	890-879
Jehoshaphat,	876-852	Ahab,	878-857
Jehoram,	851-844	Ahaziah,	856-855
Ahaziah,	843	Jehoram,	854-853
Athaliah,	842-837	Jehu,	842-815
Joash,	836-797	Jehoahaz,	814-798
Amaziah,	796-778	Jehoash,	797-782
Uzziah,	777-736	Jeroboam II.,	781-741
Jotham,	750-735	Zachariah, }	741
Ahaz,	734-715	Shallum, }	
Hezekiah,	714-686	Menahem,	740-738
Manasseh,	685-641	Pekahiah,	737-736
Amon,	640-639	Pekah,	736-730
Josiah,	638-608	Hoshea,	730-722
Jehoahaz,	608		
Jehoiakim,	607-597		
Jehoiachin,	597		
Zedekiah,	596-586		

From "The Chronology of the Hebrew Kings," by Prof. Adolf Kamphausen, p. 32.

"*The chronological problems* presented by early Israelitish history must be acknowledged to be most difficult and baffling. No system can claim absolute exactness. The well authenticated data furnished by the Assyrian monuments have demonstrated conclusively that the old chronology of Bishop Ussher, which up to the present time has been generally followed by English students, can be no longer defended. Availing himself of this new light, Prof. Kamphausen has investigated the entire subject with such thoroughness and care that his results have commanded deserved acceptance." Professors C. F. Kent,

Ph. D., and G. S. Goodspeed, Ph. D., in introduction to "Students' Chart of Biblical History."

HISTORICAL CONFIRMATIONS

Our space permits mention of only a few of these, but if space permitted the evidence is not all in. Then too, there are difficulties in many lines, chronological and historical, waiting for the light; yet this fact is very plain, that in the last few years the evidence for the truth of the Scripture records from the monuments of the ancient nations has been accumulating very rapidly. This confirmation comes not only from direct mention by name of kings and events, but from inscriptions which show the social, religious and political conditions of the past ages.

The question, back of all criticism of the text, age, author, etc., of the books, is: Are these events true history? Archaeological research is answering that question with a decided "yes." For instance, it is now seen that "the Assyrian dates do not contradict but interpret the Bible dates, leading us to understand how the years were reckoned and to take account of the overlapping of different reigns when the son reigned with his father and the contemporaneous portions are reckoned to both kings."

Israel and Judah came in contact with nations which understood the art of writing and record-keeping; these records were for the most part inscribed upon stone and clay. There are the so-called "Royal Inscriptions" which were placed in temples and palaces to commemorate the exploits of kings; these

are very valuable and from them we have many confirmations of Jewish history.

a. *In the Assyrio-Babylonian inscriptions* mention is made of six kings of Israel: Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Menahem, Pekah and Hoshea, (also Hiram of Tyre, Benhadad, Hazael and Rezin of Damascus) and four kings of Judah, Azariah, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh. We have also an account of Tiglath-pileser's movement on Samaria and Syria, Shalmaneser's invasion of Palestine and Sennacherib's war with Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32: 1-5). The siege of Lachish by Sennacherib (2 Chron. 32: 9; 2 Kings 18:14) is shown on thirteen slabs of bas relief in the palace at Koyunjik "labeled with the name of the monarch and the town."

The black obelisk, set up by Shalmaneser II., and now in the British museum, London, tells of the tribute that Jehu, king of Israel, gave to him; there is also a monolith set up by the same king (found at Karkh) which mentions Ahab, king of Israel.

In the records of Tiglath-pileser no less than five Hebrew kings are mentioned by name: Azariah, Jehoahaz (Ahaz), Menahem, Pekah, Hoshea (as well as Rezin of Damascus, Hiram of Tyre, etc.).

The great inscription in the palace of Khorsabad, which relates to Sargon and the siege of Samaria. (Translated by Dr. Jules Oppert in "Records of the Past," Vol. 9, pp. 1-21.)

A hexagonal clay prism (found in Nineveh in 1830, known as the Taylor cylinder, "Records of the Past," Vol. 1, pp. 33-53), shows the tribute given Sennacherib

by Menahem king of Israel, and Hezekiah king of Judah.

b. *Egyptian records.* One especially valuable is that which Shishak set up on the walls of the great temple of Karnak commemorating his invasion of Palestine and the taking of Jerusalem in the days of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.

c. *Moabite inscriptions.* The most important is the Moabite stone set up by King Mesha of Moab which records events related in the Scriptures. 2 Kings 3.

Space forbids further mention, but enough is shown to reveal how valuable is our treasure in the buried cities of the past that are now yielding up their records for us and confirming the truth of our Bible. See "Recent Research in Bible Lands," edited by Prof. H. V. Hilprecht; Kittel's "History of the Hebrews," Vol. 3, p. 230-233. "Expositors' Bible," Second Book of Kings, Appendix.

QUESTIONS

What can be said of the disruption of the kingdom? The causes of the division; first and second causes? What was the condition of the two kingdoms; the northern and southern? What were the four clearly defined epochs in the relations between the kingdoms? What can be said of the kings of Israel? Name them and give the characteristics of their reign. What can be said of the kings of Judah? Name them and give the characteristics of their reign. How is the record of the kings confirmed? What is the question back of all criticism of the books? How do the Assyrio-Babylonian, the Egyptian and the Moabite inscriptions confirm the truth of the Scriptures?

XII

PROPHETS OF THE KINGDOM

Scripture: The prophets Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Joel, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah

WHAT A PROPHET IS

The Bible represents a prophet to be one who speaks for another; this is the relation in which he stands to God; the prophet communicates the message which he has received from God to the people. Ex. 7:1; Deut. 18:18-22.

a. *The words of the prophet* do not always relate to future events; he was not only a foreteller but a forthteller of God's will; insight in regard to present as well as foresight in regard to future events was a part of his mission. This double function of the prophet and his vital relation to his own times as well as to the future has too often been overlooked.

b. *A distinction is made in the Scriptures between teachers and prophets*; the former might teach in the name of God, but were not inspired like the latter. The prophet is the immediate organ of God.

There are true prophets and false prophets; the first are under the direct control of the Spirit of God. "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of

man: but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1: 21. The second speak out of their own hearts. Jer. 23: 16.

THE PROPHETIC ORDER

Samuel was the great organizer of the prophetic order. Acts 3: 24; Jer. 15: 1; 1 Sam. 3: 20. When the work of Moses sank into degeneracy in the times of the Judges then this new order arose. The germ of it is found in the Mosaic legislation. Deut. 13: 1; 18: 20. Even before the time of Moses, Abraham was called a prophet (Gen. 20: 7), as one to whom God had made a revelation. But with Samuel the prophets come into great prominence and take a very important part in national affairs; he inaugurates the kingdom and anoints both Saul and David.

a. *Prophetic schools* were organized by Samuel as a means of permanently establishing the prophetic order. These schools were located at Ramah, Jericho, Bethel, Gilgal and other places. 1 Sam. 19: 19, 20; 2 Kings 2: 3-5; 4: 38; 6: 1.

b. *The students in the schools* studied the sacred law, music, and played on musical instruments. They doubtless made copies of the law and taught it. The narrative seems to warrant the assertion that they, as they went about, sometimes in bands, preached to and exhorted the people probably something after the manner of evangelists.

THE PROPHETIC GIFT

Not all who attended the schools of the prophets

were inspired and possessed the prophetic gift: this was something that must come from God direct. The training in the schools was necessary, but when it was over the Divine call was indispensable. There was not only the call for service, but calls to utter specific prophecies. 1 Sam. 3:10; Isaiah 6:8; Jer. 1:5; Ezekiel 2:1-3. The sixteen prophets whose writings appear in the books headed by their own names, occupied a large place in Israel's life and history. Sometimes the prophet was fitted for his work elsewhere than in the schools, as in the case of Amos (7:14).

PROPHETIC TEACHING

a. "*The ruling idea* was the establishment of God's kingdom in the world."

b. *God*. They taught the unity, spirituality, holiness, justice and goodness of God in the midst of polytheistic and morally corrupted nations. They were preachers of righteousness and protested against evils in worship and morals.

c. *Country*. They were ardent patriots and tried with a noble sacrifice of self and all their interests to direct the nation in right ways and save it from destruction.

d. *Other nations* or the people round about the chosen nation came under their view and they made predictions in regard to them and called them to account: Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Syria, Moab, Edom and their cities. The predictions about these countries and cities have been most remarkably fulfilled.

The great empires of the East are no more and their capitals are heaps of ruins, just as the prophets declared they would be, even in the height of their power.

e. *The Messianic expectation. The great subject was the Messianic King and Kingdom.* This kingdom was to include the whole earth and to be ruled over by an invisible king. "Its head was to be a Redeemer, of the seed of Abraham and the house of David. His subjects were to be holy in heart and life. By this King and His kingdom evil was to be conquered, and perfect communion restored between God and man. It was by the proclamation of this kingdom that Christ began His ministry."

f. *The prophecies in regard to Christ are very explicit.*

(1) His mission: to deliver men from the curse of sin (Gen. 3:15); to bless all families (Gen. 22:18); to comfort (Is. 25:8; 61:1); to bring light (Is. 49:6).

(2) His prophetic power (Deut. 18:18, 19).

(3) His kingly office: universal dominion (Gen. 49:8-10); "wonderful counselor, mighty God" (Is. 9:6); of the house of David (Jer. 23:5-6; Ez. 22:17; 34:23-25; Dan. 7:13, 14); speaking peace (Zech. 9:9); His glory (Haggai 2:6); No end to the increase of His government (Is. 9:7).

(4) His priestly activity: He is to suffer, the innocent for the guilty, with pierced hands and feet (Ps. 22:16), bearing our griefs (Is. 53), and bringing salvation to Jews and Gentiles (Is. 55:4, 5). He is to be a source of blessing to all (Is. 60). The

priestly and kingly offices are to be united in Him (Zech. 6: 13). He is the messenger of the new covenant (Mal. 3: 1).

(5) The circumstances of His coming: as a man (Gen. 3: 15); through a nation (Gen. 22: 18); through a tribe (Gen. 49: 10); through a family (Is. 11: 1); in a town (Micah 5: 2); to a person (Luke 1: 30); at a certain day (Luke 2: 11); in a definite place (Matt. 2: 9). See Dr. Dunning's "Bible Studies," pp. 45, 46. The above are only a few out of the many Scripture passages which might be given on this great subject.

THE SIXTEEN WRITTEN PROPHECIES

There are sixteen prophets whose writings appear in book form in the Old Testament. They are arranged in the following order: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. As they are placed they are not in chronological order. As an approximate chronology, given by Dr. Marcus Dods, the following may be accepted: Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

a. *Under the monarchy*, Israel's prophets: Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah. Judah's prophets: Joel, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah.

b. *Under the captivity*: Ezekiel, Obadiah, Daniel.

c. *In the restoration*: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

THE PROPHETS OF THE KINGDOM

a. *The united kingdom.* The most prominent is Samuel, who founded the prophetic order and anointed the first two kings, Saul and David. His work has already been treated in the lesson on the Rise of the Kingdom.

b. *The divided kingdom.*

(1) The Prophets of the Northern Kingdom.

Elijah (1 Kings 17: 1-2 Kings 2:12) and Elisha (1 Kings 19:16-2 Kings 13:20). They appeared at a very critical time in the history of Israel and testified against the idolatry and evil of the times. Elijah in his rebuke of Ahab and the contest with the priests of Baal rises to a heroic height. They did much to bring back the people to Jehovah, but could not save the nation.

Jonah. The only notice we have of him besides his book, which is the story of a prophecy, appears in 2 Kings 14: 25, where he is represented as prophesying in the reign of Jeroboam II. He was a Hebrew prophet sent to a heathen nation and showed God's charge and care over all nations.

Amos. He was a native of Tekoa of Judah, but was sent to deliver his message to Bethel in the northern kingdom in the time of Jeroboam II. It was an age of outward prosperity, but of inward spiritual decline: the rich lived in luxury; the poor were degraded; the nation was depraved. The message is one of doom upon the surrounding nations and upon Israel.

Amos predicted the Assyrian Captivity, the destruction of the house of Jeroboam, the return of the remnant and the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom.

Hosea prophesied during the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II. and the reigns of Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem and Pekahiah. Israel had deeply sinned and the armies of Assyria were advancing to crush her. Hosea tried to save the nation from Assyria and called upon her to repent. He denounced and pleaded in vain. With a sore heart he proclaimed the doom of the people. We see the hope of the Messianic Kingdom in 1: 10, 11.

Micah's mission was to proclaim to Israel and Judah that judgment was at hand. He predicted the Assyrian Captivity for Israel (it took place in 722 B. C., while he was living) and the Babylonian Captivity for Judah on account of their sins. Micah prophesied during the reign of Hoshea in Israel and Hezekiah and Manasseh in Judah and was contemporary with Isaiah. His principal prophecies were: the destruction of Israel; the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple; the carrying the Jews to Babylon; the return from exile and the remarkable prediction of the place where the Messianic King should be born. Micah 5: 2.

(2) The Prophets of the Southern Kingdom:

Joel's prophecy is by many scholars placed in the early part of the reign of King Joash. A plague of locusts has devastated the land and he uses this as a sign of judgment for sins committed: the prophet calls for national repentance: the people repent and

then comes the promise of blessing. But the prophet takes a wider vision and looks forward to a "Day of Jehovah," a great and terrible day; to all who call upon the Lord there shall be a way of escape, but for the heathen there shall be no escape. At last Jerusalem shall be exalted and the power of God made known in the greatness and glory of the Messianic Kingdom.

Isaiah lived in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. His home was in Jerusalem. He is considered the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. He had a wide vision which took in not only his own nation but also Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, Damascus. He made definite predictions about these nations which have been fulfilled. He witnessed the fall of Israel in 722 B. C. and the rising power of Assyria. He tried to save Judah from the destruction which was imminent, but the people seemed to be deaf to his warning words. King Ahaz would not listen. Hezekiah heeded the prophet and was accorded a signal deliverance; but Manasseh, who succeeded king Hezekiah, returned to evil ways. While *Isaiah* predicted the great destruction that was to come upon the land for its sins, he also prophesied the return from the captivity and the glory of the Messianic King and Kingdom. So vividly does he portray the coming Christ that he almost seems to behold Him—see for example chapters 9, 53 and 60. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful,

Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Is. 9: 6, 7.

Nahum prophesied the downfall and utter ruin of the Assyrian empire when it was at the height of its power, and his prediction was literally fulfilled. This prophecy shows God to be the moral governor of the world. If Israel was punished for her sins the heathen nations could not escape. Jehovah is above all gods. *Nahum* lived under king *Josiah*.

Zephaniah also prophesied during the reign of *Josiah*. This king was preceded by the corrupt and idolatrous *Manasseh* and *Amon*, so that things were in a very bad state when he came to the throne. *Zephaniah* was a preacher of righteousness and denounced the evils of his times in unsparing terms. He helped to bring about a reformation. He taught that not only Israel but all nations will be called to account for their sins. A new note is struck in the proclamation that the time will come when the heathen nations will be converted and that then men will not gather to Zion but will worship God each from his own place (2: 11) Judgment is proclaimed upon the heathen nations who will not obey God. Again the Messianic Kingdom is proclaimed (3: 14-20).

Habakkuk coming also in the reign of *Josiah* and later answers the question why wickedness seems to

triumph. Here is a grand vindication of God's righteousness. In the end he shows that right must prevail. The questioning arose out of the fact that Jerusalem was about to fall before the rising Chaldean power and that this wicked Chaldean power was the instrument of destruction. Here we find the doctrine of faith proclaimed: that where we cannot see we must walk by faith—"the just shall live by his faith." God works in a large way and will in the end bring the right uppermost. The prophet sets forth this lesson learned by faith in ch. 3:17-19.

Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. Judah had sinned away her day of grace and the end was now very near. Jeremiah tried to rouse his country to her great peril and sought to stay the tide of evil by warnings, entreaties and judgments, but the people were infatuated with their sins. The city was doomed and about to undergo the death agony. The prophet foretold the destruction of the city by the Chaldeans (this took place in 586 B. C.), the captivity (25:12) and the return from the captivity (29:10), the coming of the Messianic King (23:5, 6) and the glory of the Messianic Kingdom. This prophet is remarkable for his predictions about the surrounding nations and their end (chs. 46-51). These prophecies have had a wonderful fulfilment.

NOTE—For a more detailed account of the prophets and analysis of their books see "The Expositor's Bible," "The Doctrine of the Prophets," by A. F. Kirkpatrick, D. D., Ewald's "Prophecies of the Old Testament" and Delitzsch's "Messianic Prophecies." See also the author's "Bible Study by Books."

THE TIMES OF THE PROPHETS

If we are to understand the prophets we must know something about the age in which they lived and the problems which had to be solved. Much of "the teaching of the prophets arose out of the needs of their times as the teaching of the apostles took its rise out of the needs of the different churches to which they wrote." The prophets saw the sins of Israel and Judah; they realized that punishment for these sins was sure to come; hence they urged repentance and a return to God. They understood the love of Jehovah for His people and perceived the grand mission of the nation, and hence their entreaties and passionate yearning over a sinful, although chosen people. Then there is the wider outlook which embraces all time, but even this can be better understood when we know the standpoint from which these wonderful visions were seen.

a. *There were three stages of development through which Israel passed:*

1. The nomadic. Abraham lived in a tent and had flocks and herds. This state of the people practically continued until the time of Joshua. In the desert there were the twelve tribes of Israel with the customs and manners of a wandering people.

2. The agricultural. When Joshua conquered the land of Canaan and the nation entered on its inheritance, the habits and customs incident to nomadic life were given up and the Israelites became tillers of the soil, dwelling upon the land which they culti-

vated or in villages and cities. This state continued until the time of Samuel. In the nomadic and agricultural stages of development the Israelites had comparatively little to do with the surrounding peoples; they were to a large extent shut up to themselves; there was no large wealth and not much opportunity for great national sins. In these stages great truths about God were taught. The desert wandering, in the respect of keeping the people shut up to God and themselves, was of great value, for here many valuable lessons were learned. But this nation, which was to be a blessing to all nations, must now come in contact with other nations, so it enters upon another stage.

3. The commercial. From the time of Samuel and the beginning of the kingdom to the captivity of Jerusalem. The Jewish nation became a nation of traders having dealings with the surrounding nations, sending out caravans and ships, and sending and receiving embassies. They are no longer shut up to themselves. This commercial spirit is especially prominent from Solomon on through the divided kingdom. We have now to deal with the city and "city life developed at the expense of the country," social wants and sins, the evils of great wealth quickly won, dire poverty, the dark shadow flung by immense wealth, and ostentatious luxury. Foreign vices were brought in with the goods of foreign nations. The times changed and the people with them; they sought now not to be conformed to Jehovah and His laws, but to be like the great and evil nations

around them. We have here a new civilization and a new world. Will the Israelites convert the heathen nations or will the heathen nations convert Israel? Will the Israelites be able to fulfil their mission and to be a light to the world under these new conditions?

It is just here that the prophets stand raising warning voices, threatening and entreating Israel and Judah to stand true to God, for He is greater than any nation, and He can keep and preserve them from all evil. Their glorious destiny is pointed out, the expectation of a Messianic King and Kingdom is kept before them, but in vain—the nation is sinful and captivity must come; the people must be disciplined.

Because the prophets lived in the times of great commercial activity when the people passed from the agricultural to the commercial age, and because the United States is in this condition to-day, the writings of the prophets have especial and intense interest for us. It is of a universal king and universal dominion for a righteous people with no shut-in nations that the prophets preached. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, the greatest nations of ancient times have all gone into oblivion because they would not be righteous and serve God.

b. *The part that Assyria played in the development of prophecy was very great.*

From 1150–870 B. C. the Palestinian states were not troubled by Assyria, but about the period of the later date Assurnasirpal reached the Levant and took tribute of Tyre and Sidon. From this time on the Assyrian

power (with many backward moves) gradually encroached upon the Israelites until 722 B. C. they were taken into captivity. The Assyrians yielded the scepter of power to the Chaldeans and they took Jerusalem in 586 B. C. and Judah also passed into captivity. It is of these great powers and their gradual encroachment that the prophets have so much to say. It is from bondage to them that the prophets tried to save both Israel and Judah, and failed; not because God was lacking in power, but on account of the sins in which they persisted. When the prophets saw that the people paid no heed they predicted the captivities and the discipline necessary to wean the chosen people from sin; they also foretold a great and glorious mission after the return from captivity with the Messianic King and Kingdom. But to many pious and patriotic Hebrews who did not have the prophets' view these must have seemed to be the last days. The gradually approaching great power that was to crush their national life, the taking of Samaria, the advance on Jerusalem, the final destruction of the city and temple, the burning of the palaces, must have led them to the verge of despair. But the prophets showed a greater side to God than the Israelites had ever dreamed; they widened out the political and religious horizon; they revealed the fact that all nations were in His power; that the Assyrians and Chaldeans were only being used as instruments, and for their sins they should be likewise punished. Jehovah was the God not only of one but all nations; all times, and all seasons were in His hands. Isaiah, Jeremiah and

others make predictions and call to repentance the surrounding nations as well as their own. It is this wide view that makes them the great prophets that they are. They teach the largest and highest conceptions of God in His dealings with men and nations. They declare that because things go wrong now or for ages it is no sign they will always go wrong; that God is forever in charge and there is an overruling Providence that will bring things out right in the end. They assert that no man, no set of men, and no nation can ever thwart God's plans.

QUESTIONS

What is a prophet? What is the prophetic order; schools; students? What is the prophetic gift? What did the prophets teach; the ruling idea; God; country; other nations; about Christ? What are the sixteen written prophecies? Who prophesied under the northern kingdom? Who under the southern kingdom? Give some account of these prophets. What can be said of the times of the prophets; the three stages of development through which Israel passed; the relation of Assyria to the prophets?

PERIOD IV

THE CAPTIVITY AND RETURN

CHAPTERS

- XIII. THE CAPTIVITY
- XIV. THE RETURN FROM EXILE
- XV. PROPHETS OF THE EXILE AND RETURN
- XVI. MALACHI TO CHRIST

XIII

THE CAPTIVITY

*Scripture: 2 Kings 17: 1-18; 24: 1-25: 30; 2 Chron. 36;
Ezekiel, Daniel, Esther, etc.*

THE MEANING OF THE CAPTIVITY

We have followed the fortunes of the chosen people and nation from a small beginning to a great and influential state; from a tabernacle in the wilderness to the magnificent temple of Solomon, and later on through the times of the divided monarchy. Now we come to a series of great and terrible calamities; Israel falls (722 B. C.) before the Assyrian power and Judah is taken into captivity by the Babylonians (586 B. C.). The city of Jerusalem, in which so many hopes have centered, is destroyed with its temple and palaces. To many patriotic and devout Jews of that period it must have seemed, in this apparent destruction of all their hopes and the apparent triumph of heathenism, that Jehovah had forgotten His people.

As we read this history in the light of subsequent events we see Jehovah working as effectively for the greatness and glory of His people as in the days of king David.

a. *The sins of the people*, it is declared in the

Scriptures, caused the downfall of the state and the destruction of the temple. Jehovah tried to save His people by sending prophet after prophet to warn them of the consequences of sin, but the people would not listen or else made outward reforms with no change of heart or inward life. The result of persistent sinning is destruction, and it came upon the beloved people as well as upon other nations.

b. *The triumph of Jehovah* was made plain in more than one sense. The kings of Israel and Judah sought to preserve the state by every possible expedient save by the sincere repentance from sin and turning to God, hence they were delivered into the hands of their enemies.

Again Jehovah rose triumphant over the fall of the state. In ancient times each state or nation had its god or gods; when the nation went down the gods ceased to exist. When Assyria, Babylon, Egypt and later on Greece and finally Rome fell, their gods died; they are now curiosities, but Jehovah was more powerful than ever and worshiped with a greater fervor and single-heartedness in the time of captivity.

It was the custom when a nation was conquered by another nation and the people deported to another country, for the defeated nation to change its god or gods for those of the locality into which it was carried. But the strength of Israel's religion is shown by its great vitality in the land of its exile. (Prof. McCurdy's "History, Prophecy and the Monuments," Vol. 1, pp. 68, 69.)

c. *The death of the state and the rise of the church.*

The Theocracy passed into the kingdom and the kingdom now passes into the church. The Jews no longer thought of the state and the temple as dwelling places of Jehovah; as for a time they had ceased to exist. Their conceptions of Jehovah were enlarged and purified and they were kept together by a spiritual bond. The expectation of a Messianic King and Kingdom became more marked. The thought of the universal rule of God who was to reign in righteousness over the whole earth became more fixed.

d. *A remnant of the people was preserved* through captivity by the care of God, to return to Jerusalem. It is a marvelous thing that this nation was not absorbed by the great empire by which it was taken captive. God's purpose in preserving this people for their great work is very manifest. 2 Kings 19: 31.

THE CAPTIVITY OF THE TEN TRIBES

a. *The historical situation* (2 Kings 17: 1-18).

In Assyria, Shalmaneser IV. was on the throne. In Egypt So (Sabaco) was the reigning Pharaoh. In Israel, Hoshea was king. In consequence of certain revolts and troubles in the Assyrian empire, Hoshea, king of Israel, refused to pay his tribute to Shalmaneser and sought an alliance with So, king of Egypt. Upon this Shalmaneser came up with an army and besieged Samaria, the capital of Israel, and after three years the city was taken. During the siege Shalmaneser died and his kingdom passed to Sargon,

by whom the city was captured and the Israelites carried into captivity. Upon tablets, found in Nineveh, from Sargon's great library we have the king's own account of this siege. He says: "I besieged the city of Samaria and took it. I carried off 27,280 of the citizens. I chose fifty chariots for myself from the whole number taken; all the other property of the town I left for my servants to take. I appointed resident officers over them, and imposed upon them the same tribute as had formerly been paid. In the place of those taken into captivity, I sent thither inhabitants of the land conquered by me, and imposed the tribute on them which I require from Assyrians."

This is the end of the northern kingdom. This great event took place in 722 B. C. This is a date upon which there is universal agreement by the authorities.

b. *The religious or moral causes of the downfall of Israel.* These are given in 2 Kings 17:7-18. Israel is brought to the bar of God and the indictment is formally presented. There is no doubt of her guilt. Hypocrisy, idolatry, resistance to good influences, persistence in evil ways, rejecting Jehovah's statutes, cruelty and crime are charged and proved. Therefore the Lord removed this nation out of His sight.

Israel could have been saved if she had listened to God. It is shown again and again in Bible history that God held the mighty empires in check when He pleased. The prophets declare their mission to Assyria and Egypt as well as to Israel; they prophesy

their destruction on account of their sins, as well as that of Israel.

Israel was warned by the prophets of impending destruction unless she walked in the ways of righteousness, but she would not give heed. Men and nations sin and accept the consequences; they sin again and yet again, but finally repeated sins render recovery impossible and the doom settles upon them from which there is no escape.

There has been no recovery of the lost ten tribes, although diligent search has been made; they were mingled with the Assyrians; they did not return to their native land as a nation; doubtless some as individuals returned with the Jews under Ezra and Nehemiah. "Here is the only place to look for the lost ten tribes. The remnant was saved."

THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

a. *The historical situation.* Since the fall of Israel in 722 B. C. Assyria, which took her into captivity, has also fallen (this was predicted by the prophet Nahum) and the great empire of Babylon has taken the place of Assyria. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was captured in 608-606 B. C. Babylon did not succeed to the western provinces of Assyria without a struggle with Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, at the head of his troops met Pharaoh Necho, who led the Egyptian army, near Carchemish at the fords of the Euphrates (605-604 B. C.) and signally defeated him. Pharaoh Necho was obliged to retire to Egypt. It was not until a

few years after this decisive conflict that Nebuchadnezzar appeared before the walls of Jerusalem in the reign of king Jehoiakim.

To go back a number of years, Judah was invaded by the Assyrians in 701 B. C. and an account of this is given not only in 2 Kings 18:13, but also by Sennacherib on one of his own cylinders, but he did not record his defeat as stated in 2 Kings 19:35.

b. *The gradual decline and fall of Judah.*

There were three movements in the captivity. The struggle against the Babylonians occupied about twenty years.

1. Nebuchadnezzar was called home by the death of his father, Nabopolassar, immediately after the battle of Carchemish; but he seems to have invaded Judah and taken some captives. 2 Kings 24:1; Dan. 1:1, 2; Jer. 25:1. Daniel and his companions were taken into captivity at this date. Dan. 1:1-7. This is sometimes called the first captivity.

2. Second Captivity. 2 Kings 24:10-16. This took place during the reign of Jehoiachin (597 B. C.) who was king but three months in Jerusalem. He probably rebelled against Babylon, for Nebuchadnezzar again came and took the city of Jerusalem; this time he proceeded to dismantle the city. "And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house. . . . and he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained save the poorest sort of the

people of the land." 2 Kings 24:14,15; Ezekiel 1:1,2. "And the great grandfather of Mordecai, Queen Esther's cousin" (Esther 2:5,6) was carried away with king Jehoiachin at this time.

3. The fall of Jerusalem. Zedekiah, who was placed upon the throne of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, also rebelled, and again the king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and this time "they burnt the house of God and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire." 2 Chron. 36:19. The destruction of the city was complete. 2 Chron. 36:11-21; Jeremiah 52:1-11; 2 Kings 24:18; 25:1-27.

This is known as the great siege when Jerusalem was finally destroyed in 586 B. C., and the inhabitants deported. This is the end of the southern kingdom. The people were carried into exile to return at the close of the captivity into their own land.

c. *The religious and moral causes of the exile* are the same as in the case of Israel; they are fully set forth in the pages of Jeremiah, Isaiah and other prophets. God would have made a great nation of this people, but they rebelled against His ordinances and would not obey His laws.

d. *The messages of the prophets of the exile are considered in another chapter.*

THE STATE OF THE EXILES

The captives were settled in colonies at various

points in the empire. One colony, with which Ezekiel resided, dwelt "by the river of Chebar." Ezk. 1:1. They also had special quarters in the large cities and towns, as in Babylon. They married, owned houses, cultivated the ground, traded, and probably had as much liberty as the other inhabitants of the land. Jer. 29:4-7. Sabbath assemblies were held in which the Scriptures were read and comments made upon them. These assemblies were held in the synagogues which grew up when the temple was destroyed and the people could not worship in Jerusalem. There was a ruling body in the heads of the families mentioned by Ezekiel which had supervision over the religious and social life of the people. The sacred books were collected and edited. There were also the scribes, who did an important work.

THE HOPE OF THE PEOPLE

This hope and desire were centered in two things:

- a. *The return to Jerusalem* and the lifting of the captivity which had been predicted by the prophets.
- b. *The coming of the Messianic King and Kingdom.*

THE GREAT LESSON TAUGHT

As the years passed on it was felt that the greatness and supremacy of Jehovah were no longer in question. The exile of the Jews resulted in the utter extinction of idolatry.

QUESTIONS

What is the meaning of the captivity; the sins of the people, what did they have to do with it; how did Jehovah triumph? What is meant by the death of the state and the rise of the church? The captivity of the ten tribes; give the historical situation and the religious and moral causes of the downfall; has there been any recovery of the lost ten tribes? The captivity of Judah; give the historical situation; give an account of the three movements in the captivity of Judah. What were the religious and moral causes of the exile? What was the state of the exiles? What was the hope of the people? What was the great lesson taught?

XIV

THE RETURN FROM EXILE

Scripture: Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah

THE END OF THE CAPTIVITY

It had been predicted that the Jews should remain in captivity for seventy years. Jer. 25: 11, 12; 29: 10; Dan. 9: 2. This prophecy was dated from the fall of Jerusalem 586 B. C. and was fulfilled when the temple was rebuilt in 516 B. C.

In 538 B. C. the great city of Babylon fell and the Jews were given permission to return to their homes; this return took place in 537-6, for it must have taken some time for such a numerous company of men to adjust their affairs and prepare for the journey to Jerusalem. While a large number of Jews availed themselves of the decree (Ez. 1: 1-3) of Cyrus, many remained in the land of exile.

It was the custom of the Assyrian kings to transport conquered peoples (or at least the upper classes) from their native homes so that they might become amalgamated with their conquerors. This was a good policy in the main, but with the Jews it only intensified the love they had for their country and their religion. Cyrus, we find from his own inscriptions, reversed this policy of the Babylonians and Assyrians

and gave permission to the captive peoples to return to their own land.

“ We now possess the account given by Cyrus himself of the overthrow of the Babylonian king and the conqueror’s permission to the captives in Babylonia to return to their homes. The account is contained in two documents, written like most other Assyrian and Babylonian records, upon clay, and lately brought from Babylonia to England by Mr. Rassam.” (“ Introduction to the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther,” Prof. A. H. Sayce.)

THE HISTORICAL SITUATION

Since the downfall of Israel in 722 B. C., some very important changes have taken place.

a. *Assyria*, which seemed to bulk so large in the eyes of the world, had her capital, Nineveh, taken in 608-606 B. C., and was numbered among the dead empires.

b. *Babylon*, another great and mighty nation, ceased to exist in 538 B. C.

c. *The little Jewish nation*, dismembered, worried and torn, and carried into captivity by these two huge empires, lived on. It had a vitality from God which could not be crushed by any earthly prince or king.

While the Jewish nation stood in awe and trembled before the power of her giant neighbors, her prophets were bidding her be of good cheer. Nahum, Micah (5:6), Zephaniah (2:13) and others clearly foretold the downfall of Assyria. Jeremiah (25:12), Isaiah (13:19-22) and others predicted a like fate for

Babylon. These prophets also foretold that while Assyria and Babylon should be in perpetual desolation, that Judah should live, return from the captivity, the temple be rebuilt and Jerusalem inhabited.

d. *Persia*. It is under Cyrus, the king of this empire, that the Jews returned to Jerusalem.

1. We have a clearer view of the events which took place during the times of the captivity and the restoration, so far as outside history is concerned, than the Greek and Latin historians and writers who could not translate the cuneiform characters. We read the records now as they were written by the Babylonians and Persians and find that the account of the subjection of Babylon given by Herodotus and repeated from him by subsequent writers is full of errors. For example, the siege of Babylon of which we read in Herodotus did not take place during the reign of Cyrus, for he entered it without fighting a battle, all the country around having fallen under his victorious arms. Babylon was taken by a stratagem: this is implied in Dan. 5: 30, where there is no mention of a siege. Again, until the cuneiform inscriptions were deciphered it was claimed that the Bible was incorrect in its mention of Belshazzar and in making him to appear as king of Babylon. Now the Babylonian records show that he was associated with his father Nabonidus as king and upon the night the city was taken Nabonidus was away from the city. In Dan. 5: 29, Belshazzar, it is declared, made Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom: this is in strict accord with the cuneiform inscriptions, for as Belshazzar

was second in the kingdom he could raise Daniel to no higher position. The difficulty is the position of Darius (Dan. 5:31), who is not to be confounded with Darius Hystaspes, who came later. This question is ably discussed in larger works. Some of the explanations are that he was the commanding general under Cyrus or that he was the king of the Medes and became king of Babylon after the siege under Cyrus, whose title was "The King of the World." It is remarkable how these cuneiform inscriptions are clearing up obscure portions of our Bible history and giving us fuller details of these great events.

2. Twenty years before the fall of Babylon and the return of the Jews to Jerusalem the whole East was in a violent state of ferment. Cyrus king of Elam had arisen and entered upon a career of conquest. He subdued Media and conquered the East as far as the Himalaya Mountains, then he turned his face to the West and made captive the nations as far as the Aegean. Babylon alone remained unsubdued, but this city fell before the victorious army in 538 B. C. Cyrus died in 529 B. C. and Kambyzes his son succeeded him; he added Egypt to the empire left him by his father. On the death of Kambyzes he was succeeded by Pseudo-Smerdis, 522-521, who usurped the throne; he is not mentioned in the Scriptures and only reigned seven months. Darius I., the son of Hystaspes (521-485 B. C.), comes next in succession. This king was petitioned to forward the building of the temple; in answer he gave command to complete

the building (Ezra 4:5, 24; 5:6, 7; 6:1-12). Xerxes I. was the next king; he reigned from 485-465 B. C. and is the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. Artaxerxes I., under whom Ezra (7:1) and Nehemiah (2:1) returned to Jerusalem and from whom they received such tokens of royal favor, reigned from 465-424 B. C. Other kings succeed these until 331 B. C. when the Persian empire fell before the arms of Alexander the Great, and still the little Jewish nation lived on.

"The Persian empire was enormous in its extent. It included Afghanistan on the east and Asia Minor on the west; to the north it reached as far as the Caucasus; on the south it included Egypt among its provinces and it was washed by the Indian Ocean." This great empire was thoroughly organized under competent governors and officers. The capitals were: Persepolis, Babylon, Shusham (Neh. 1:1) and Ecbatana or Achmetha (Ezra 6:2).

THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM

a. *The prophets had foretold* the restoration of the Jews, or a remnant, to their native land. The years of captivity had been fulfilled and in the providence of God the time had now come.

b. *The decree for the return* was made by Cyrus, king of Persia. Ez. 1:1-4.

c. *The leader* for the journey was Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel (who are considered to be the same person), a descendant of king David (Ez. 1:8, 11; 2:2).

d. *The number* who returned is given by Ezra and

Nehemiah (Ez. 2:64; Neh. 7:66) as 42,360. This number is supposed to be that of heads of families only and not of women and children; if the latter should be counted in due proportion they would make a company of something over 200,000 persons. The registers and genealogies of the people and priests had been carefully kept in anticipation of the return. Ez. 2.

They were by no means a poor company but were amply provided with goods. Ez. 1:6.

They took with them the gold and silver vessels of the temple which had been captured by Nebuchadnezzar. Ez. 1:7-11.

e. *The journey.* The returning exiles "traveled along what was afterwards called the Royal Road. It led them by the banks of the Tigris past the mounds which marked the desolate site of Nineveh and the ancient city of Haran, with its temple of the moon god which had been recently half-destroyed by the barbarian invaders, to the ford over the Euphrates that had once been commanded by the Hittite capital Carchemish. From thence the exiles must have turned to the south by the way of Aleppo and Hamath and so at last have found themselves in their own land amid the blackened ruins of Jerusalem."

f. *The time spent on this journey* occupied four months or even longer. Ezra was four months in accomplishing the same distance with a smaller company. Ez. 7:9.

g. *The arrival* in Jerusalem was on the first day of September or the Jewish month of Tisri. They

found the temple in ruins and immediately set about rebuilding it. Stones were at hand, but the timber had to be brought from Lebanon. Owing to the opposition of the foreign colonies which had been settled around Jerusalem, the temple was not completed until about 516 B. C. The temple was rebuilt, however, in spite of bitter opposition; and the sacrifices and services were instituted.

THE ORDER OF EVENTS

That is, as they are given in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. This history of the times (in which may also be included the books of Daniel, Esther and the notices in the books of the prophets) is not full and complete and is not intended to be so. The story is set forth only so far as it relates to the Jewish people and the carrying out the Divine plan in regard to this nation. The history is very much condensed and there are periods of which we have little or no record: for instance, between chapters six and seven of the book of Ezra we have an interval of nearly sixty years.

The two short books of Ezra and Nehemiah cover a period of over one hundred years, or from the fall of Babylon and the first year of Cyrus, 538 B. C., to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, 432 B. C.

We have in Ezra and Nehemiah three quite clearly defined eras.

a. *The first colony* was led to Jerusalem by Zerubbabel (Ez. 1-6). We have here a period of over twenty-one years, or up to about 516 B. C. We

find in these chapters a graphic picture of the times. The proclamation of Cyrus allowing the return to Jerusalem. Ez. 1. The number and names of those who returned. Ez. 2. The altar set up and the foundations of the temple laid. Ez. 3. Adversaries stop the building of the temple. Ez. 4. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah appear and urge the renewal of building operations. The temple is completed and dedicated. Ez. 5 and 6.

Zerubbabel is governor, Jeshua is high priest, Haggai and Zechariah are prophets. A great work is done amid bitter opposition. The first colony holds its place and makes headway.

b. *The second colony* (Ez. 7-10) came to Jerusalem under the leadership of Ezra after an interval of nearly sixty years. Ez. 7. This interval represents the remaining thirty years of Darius' reign, the twenty years of Xerxes and the opening seven years of the reign of Artaxerxes. "Ezra was a ready scribe in the law of Moses." He was provided with letters from the king, not only that the rulers through whose territory he was to pass and into which he should come, should give him a safe conduct, but that they should materially assist him. His arrival at Jerusalem must have been an occasion of great joy. "This caravan numbered 1,596 men besides a certain number of priests." "Ezra's mission was a religious one," and for this he was well fitted, for he was descended from the house of Aaron. He found that gross abuses had crept into the worship and practices of the first colonies; these he reformed;

later on in the time of Nehemiah (Neh. 8) he did a great work in restoring the written law.

By chapters, the narrative is given as follows: 7-8:31, Ezra is given permission and letters to go to Jerusalem by Artaxerxes the king. A large company go with Ezra. 8: 32-36, Ezra and his colony arrive safely and offer sacrifices. 9-10, Ezra begins to reform the abuses; the people repent and put away their sins.

c. *Third expedition to Jerusalem*, the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah does not seem to have led any colony to Jerusalem, but came himself, and there did a great work not only in strengthening the hands of the Jews but in rebuilding the walls in the short period of fifty-two days. Nehemiah is one of the noblest characters depicted in the Bible. He was cup-bearer to King Artaxerxes, and his heart being touched by the woeful condition of the city of Jerusalem, he asked for, and received permission to go to that city and help his brethren. In order to accomplish his work better he was made governor. He arrived in Jerusalem thirteen years after Ezra.

After the rebuilding of the walls, Nehemiah took measures to secure the stability of the city by increasing the number of residents. Neh. 7: 4, 5; 11: 1, 2. He introduced many reforms and "attempted to redress the distress which arose from the oppression of the poor by their more wealthy brethren. He abolished usury between Jew and Jew (5:10) and obtained from wealthy money-lenders an engagement to restore the mortgaged property which had

changed hands." But an even greater work which has outlasted all the rest is the step he took "to establish the national life of the Jews upon the basis of the written law."

The book of Nehemiah falls naturally into four parts: (1) 1-7. These chapters relate how Nehemiah came to Jerusalem and what he did in rebuilding the walls, also his reform of many abuses. (2) 8-10. This section gives to Ezra the most prominent part. We have here related the wonderful revival of interest in the Scriptures, the keeping of the feast of tabernacles, and also a fast. A solemn covenant is made with God by the people. (3) 11: 1-12: 26. We have here some very important lists of the dwellers in Jerusalem and country towns, also the lists of the priestly and Levitical families. (4) 12: 27-13: 31. This gives an account of the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem about twelve years after its completion and the reforms which Nehemiah instituted upon his second visit to the city.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RETURN OF THE JEWS

a. *The Jewish nation is brought to the front of the world's stage.* The period of the control of the world by the empires of the East was drawing to a close and the scepter of dominion was about to pass to the West. Persia was the last great empire of the East and her power was given over to the Macedonian empire, the first great kingdom of the West. Had the Jewish nation continued in captivity in the far East, humanly speaking it would have been lost and

could have exerted no influence on the world. God brought it back in the right time and placed it in the center of the world's stage between the old and the new.

The beginning of the fall of the Persian empire was in the reign of Darius Hystaspes (Ezra 6:1), who was defeated at the battle of Marathon by the Greeks in 490 B. C. The hosts of his son, Xerxes, who succeeded him, were shattered at Thermopylae and Salamis. We have now to note the decline of the Persian power until the time of the conqueror, Alexander the Great, who overthrew it in 331 B. C. Assyria, Babylon, Persia, all the old mighty powers, are now dead nations, while the little Jewish nation lives on. The preservation of the Israelitish people and their faith through the war cyclones that totally wrecked the greatest empires the world has beheld, is one of the marvelous miracles of the Old Testament.

b. The attention is turned from the founding of an earthly kingdom to the establishment of a church.

The exiles were weaned from their idolatry during the days of captivity and their first work on the return to Jerusalem is to rebuild the temple and restore the worship of Jehovah. Even Nehemiah's haste in rebuilding the walls is not so much to protect the state as the worship of the sanctuary. The national life is placed upon the basis of the written law. No longer is there that strenuous attempt to push the state to the front that we see in the time of the kings, but the stress now is placed upon the right and pure worship of God. The reforms of Ezra and

Nehemiah, the utterances of Haggai and Zechariah, are all to this end of fostering and building up the spiritual life. Slowly, very slowly, emerges the thought of the spiritual kingdom of God. The great things predicted by the prophets upon the restoration do not materialize in material ways, but it begins to dawn upon the choicer spirits among the Jews that the greatness of the glory of God is commencing to manifest itself in far higher forms than they have ever dreamed. The mightiest material kingdoms have perished before their eyes. The highest expressions of worldly power soon decay. But spiritual Israel lives on; God and His cause and those whom He saves can never die. As the prophets foretold, the knowledge of this spiritual kingdom, and the acknowledgement of it in all hearts, is by and by to spread over the whole world. This is the ushering in of the Messianic King and Kingdom.

QUESTIONS

What can be said of the end of the captivity; how was prophecy fulfilled in it; what was the immediate cause of the return from exile? Give the historical situation: Assyria, Babylon, the Jewish nation, Persia. What can be said of the return to Jerusalem; the part of the prophets; the decree of Cyrus; the number who returned; the route; the time; the arrival? Give the order of events as related in Ezra and Nehemiah; the first and second colonies; the third expedition? What is the significance of the return of the Jews? How was the Jewish nation brought to the front of the world's stage? How is the attention turned from an earthly kingdom to the establishment of a church?

XV

PROPHETS OF THE EXILE AND RETURN

Scripture: Daniel, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

INTRODUCTION

We come now to the consideration of the prophets of the captivity and the restoration. The definition, place and work of the prophets are quite fully set forth in lesson twelve of this book, so that there is no need to repeat here what has been given there.

As the epistles of the New Testament had their rise in the local necessities and circumstances of the churches and must be studied in connection with them in order to their full understanding, in like manner the prophecies must be considered with reference to their times. A neglect of this plain rule has led to some curious and dangerous misinterpretations. Each prophet did not declare all the truth: one had one message and another another, but always in harmony each with the other. A building must be seen inside and outside and on the four sides in order to know it in its entirety. The kingdom of God, in all its relations to men, can only be comprehended by a careful study of all the prophets; trying to see not what we think they saw, but asking continually, "what did they really see and teach."

Prophecy was no mere unrolling of future history to gratify idle curiosity, "but was made to subserve far higher ends." The prophets claimed to be, and were, the accredited ambassadors of heaven. Their purpose and desire was to bring about a reign of righteousness on earth; to this end they pleaded, entreated, threatened, denounced and promised. The splendor of the Messianic King and Kingdom of which they had so much to say, was far beyond the glory of any earthly kingdom.

THE PROPHETS OF THE CAPTIVITY

In order to comprehend these prophets we must needs take the standpoint of the Jew just before and directly after the destruction of the beautiful temple and the holy city. With this city and this temple were bound up all his hopes. He saw destruction impending, he saw the blow fall; it seemed to him as the end of all things. When Jerusalem was taken he was transported far away into a strange land and amid an alien people. The voices of the prophets came to him in his moments of despair bidding him be of good cheer. They bade him not to mourn over the trouble that had overtaken him, for he should return, after his lesson had been learned, and the temple and city should be rebuilt. They then spoke of a more glorious kingdom than that of David or Solomon, that should begin to be established upon the return from captivity. These hopes and anticipations kept up the courage of the Jew and led him to the study of the sacred law,

to the establishment of synagogues, and separateness from the people around him. He saw with the prophets the glorious vision of the future and the greatness of God's service.

a. *The message of Daniel.* This prophet, then a young man, was taken a captive to Babylon about 606 B. C., or "in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim." Dan. 1:1; 2 Kings 24:1. He was a noble youth and was educated by order of the king in his own palace. He first came into prominence through his interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Dan. 2. He lived through the whole period of the captivity. His prophecies are so vast and comprehensive that to some it has seemed that they must be ascribed to a later date. This book has been the subject of much controversy.

The purpose of the book is not simply to give the life of Daniel, but there is a very definite line of teaching. Jehovah is magnified. He can deliver His servants. We see this in the incidents of the fiery furnace and the lion's den. He will have no idol worship before Him. The story of Belshazzar's feast. He is God over all nations; witness the destruction of the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw destroyed by "a stone cut out without hands." The Messiah is mentioned by name. There is no mistaking the clear teaching about the resurrection in Dan. 12:2, 3. Jehovah is the God of all nations, omniscient, omnipotent, pure, righteous and just.

The book of Daniel is divided into two equal parts:
(1) The Historical (ch. 1-6), relating the history of

Daniel and (2) The Prophetical (ch. 7-12), relating to Daniel's visions and dreams. In this second section the prophet has in view not merely the destiny of the Jew but the course of empires. The son of David becomes the Son of man whose kingdom shall be everlasting and rule over all (7:13, 14). Daniel is very comprehensive in his outlook. The Jew saw huge empire succeeding huge empire; the Babylonian following the the Assyrian, etc., and apparently no end to them. He asked, when will this succession cease? The prophet "shows how their sequence is determined before God and declares that when the appointed limit is reached they are overthrown by God." He grasps the great idea of an ideal world-state ruled over by principles of justice and right under the Messianic King. There is here outlined a religious philosophy of history. He views past, present and future as a comprehensive whole.

b. *The message of Ezekiel.* This prophet, the son of Buzi, was carried captive into Babylon in 597 B. C., a few years after Daniel. He lived by the river Chebar "in the land of the Chaldeans" (1:3). He had a house of his own and was married. The elders and others came to consult him and he was held in great honor (24:18; 3:24; 8:1; 12:3; 14:1; 20:1). His call came to prophesy in the fifth year of his captivity (1:2).

His prophecies are naturally divided into three great groups:

1. The fall of Jerusalem and the extinction of the state. The Jews were fondly hoping that in some way the state and city would be saved, but six years

before the final overthrow of Judah, Ezekiel declares that nothing can save it, the sins of the chosen people are too many and too great. Ezekiel brushes away all hopes and distinctly foretells that the city is doomed (ch. 1-24). Everything must be pulled down before the new kingdom is begun.

2. The judgment upon seven foreign nations and cities. The prophet takes a wide survey of the peoples and shows that God is supreme. These nations and cities, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon and Egypt, must also suffer for their sins, and destruction utter and complete will come upon them (ch. 25-32).

3. The restoration of Jerusalem. The destruction of the state and city having taken place as Ezekiel predicted in the first group of his prophecies, he now turns his attention to comforting and cheering the captives and foretelling the return from exile and the glorious kingdom of the future. He predicts wonderful things for the city, the temple, the land and the people. The prophet sees Jehovah triumphant and coming to His house as He has departed from Solomon's temple (ch. 33-48).

Ezekiel's visions and symbols, when looked at closely, are not always easy of interpretation, but he was, like John in the book of Revelation, lifted up to see the greatness and glory of God in time to come. Such a message must have been very cheering to the exiles and while helping them to bear their exile it brought them in very close touch with God. He saw the vision of the ideal temple to which all nations should come and worship Jehovah.

c. *The message of Obadiah.* Personally nothing is known of the prophet; he is hidden behind his prophecy. We have here a prediction of woe upon Edom for her brutality in rejoicing over the destruction of Jerusalem. There has been much discussion as to the time of this message, but many unite in placing it after the carrying away of Judah into captivity, in 586 B. C.

THE PROPHETS OF THE RESTORATION

The scene changes, the years of captivity have passed away. The people are settled in the promised land, for the exiles have returned by the decree of the Persian king, as the prophets declared that it was the will of God that this should take place; some of the prophecies are now fulfilled. It is marvelous how exactly these events were foretold by the ambassadors of God. But the returned captives find unexpected hindrances in the way of rebuilding the temple (these are fully set forth in the Book of Ezra, ch. 4). "Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them." Ez. 5:1. They urged and encouraged the Jews to rebuild the temple in spite of all opposition. The result was a complete triumph for the prophets; the temple was finished and dedicated amid great rejoicing. Ezra 6:15-22.

a. *The message of Haggai.* The task of the prophet was not an easy one. The temple building which had been commenced when the exiles returned to

Jerusalem had been stopped by the opposition of the tribes about Jerusalem. Not only this, but probably the Jews were very busy in building houses for themselves and had become, after a little, indifferent to the claims of God's house; this state of affairs is more than implied when the prophet declares, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses; and this house lie waste." Haggai 1:4. He had to persuade this people not only to continue work on God's house in spite of the threats of the Samaritans but also to make pecuniary sacrifices, always a hard thing to do. In getting settled and in looking after the many interests attendant upon this settlement the Jews were in danger of losing sight of their great mission and destiny as a people.

There are four prophecies:

1. Ch. 1:1-15. Haggai reproves the people for their indifference to the temple enterprise; he urges them to continue the building. The good results of Haggai's words are seen in vs. 12-15, where it is related that the people heartily responded to the call of the prophet.

2. Ch. 2:1-9. The disparagers of the work are rebuked and the promise is made of greater glory for this house than the former one.

3. Ch. 2:10-19. The explanation is given why the people have been impoverished and their prayers unanswered in the past.

4. Ch. 2:20-23. Ample protection is promised in the prosecution of the great work, for Jehovah is Lord of all kingdoms.

Haggai's mission was one of encouragement to a people trying to realize the ideal temple under opposition without and discouragement within.

b. *The message of Zechariah.* He prophesied with Haggai and the circumstances were the same.

This book is naturally divided into two parts:

1. Ch. 1-8. This section relates to the building of the temple. After the introduction, which is an exhortation to repent and turn to God (ch. 1: 1-6) there are eight symbolical visions with an appendix. Each vision is explained in the text; they are all for Judah's encouragement in the work of rebuilding the temple and the setting up of the spiritual kingdom. In ch. 6:12 there is a prophecy of Christ under the title of the "Branch" and in ch. 8 a beautiful picture of the glory of the Messianic Kingdom.

2. Ch. 9-14. This section is a very difficult one to understand. The didactic element gives place to the apocalyptic and it is not always easy to find the way. The immediate interests of the temple stand aside for the greater one of the coming of the Messianic Kingdom (ch. 9-10). The Messianic King, after a judgment upon the heathen and a storm of war, shall come to her (ch. 9:9). His policy will be peace to the heathen and "His dominion shall be from sea even to sea" (ch. 9: 10; ch. 11). Yet He will be rejected and sold for "thirty pieces of silver" (ch. 11:13). In the remaining chapters and verses we have great events foretold, but in this limited space it is not possible to discuss them and to set them in proper light. Let it suffice to say that one

thing is made very plain, and the prophet intended to make it very clear, that while wars and rumors of war would come and wickedness might prevail for a time, yet the Messiah would triumph gloriously. "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one" (ch. 14:9). "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord" (ch. 14:20).

To a people surrounded by great and mighty world powers, the strengthening words of the prophets must have been a great encouragement. (See "The Doctrine of the Prophets," Prof. A. F. Kirkpatrick, D. D.; "Handbook for Bible Classes, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi," Marcus Dods, D. D.)

c. *The message of Malachi* will be taken up in the next lesson.

THE GOAL OF PROPHECY

While the prophets each had a message for his own age, a remedy for the correction of the abuses of his own times and an outlook upon foreign nations, yet they in their large outlook proclaimed the coming of a wonderful Messianic King and Kingdom and a reign of righteousness and peace on earth. They were widely separated in time and space yet the unanimity of their voices upon the glory of the coming Messianic Kingdom is remarkable and reveals the common source of their inspiration. "From first to last prophecy pointed forward to a great Divine purpose, slowly being evolved in the course of ages, to some far

off, Divine event, towards which the history of Israel and the history of the world were moving." Not the Jew but Christ is the goal of prophecy.

At length, after ages, Christ came and we can see now how He has united these prophecies in Himself, and as His Kingdom progresses it is made more and more clear that the prophets were divinely moved to speak of Him.

QUESTIONS

How did prophecies have their rise in local circumstances? Did each prophet have a message peculiar to himself? In general, of what Kingdom did they prophesy? The prophets of the captivity, in what relation did they stand to the people? Give the message of Daniel; what is the purpose of the book; how is it divided; name some of the difficulties which it settles? Give the message of Ezekiel; into what three parts is his book divided; name the subjects which he considers in each part? What was the message of Obadiah? What was the problem of the prophets of the Restoration? What was the message of Haggai; name the burdens of his four prophecies? What was the message of Zechariah; how is his book divided; of what does the first part treat; the second? What is the goal of prophecy?

XVI

MALACHI TO CHRIST

MALACHI

He was the last of the Old Testament prophets. The time of his prophecy is thought to be between the first and second visits of Nehemiah to Jerusalem. His message was probably about the abuses that are depicted in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Nehemiah. The temple had been rebuilt and the city walls restored. The occasion which called forth the prophecy was the discontent which arose from the disappointment of the expectation of the people to at once realize the glorious Messianic Kingdom. Bad harvests had increased the disappointment. The first enthusiasm of the exiles had worn away and Jehovah's services were neglected. The people were asking, "Does it pay to serve God?" "Of what use is it to bow before Him?"

The prophet seeks to recall the people to their allegiance to Jehovah; he shows that God is still the Moral Governor of the world and Lord over all (1: 11). It will pay to serve Him. While unsparing in his denunciation of sin and the social evils of the day, Malachi cheers the people by declaring that God's messenger will come to His temple and that all the old prophecies will be fulfilled (3: 1; 4: 2, 5).

After an introduction (1: 1-5) in which Malachi reminds the people of God's love for them and their ingratitude to Him, the prophecy is divided into three parts: (1) The priests and the people are rebuked for their neglect of God's service and the bringing of improper offerings; they are threatened with a curse for their evil ways (1:6-2:9). (2) Grave social exils are considered: both priests and people had intermarried with idolatresses (2: 9-16). (3) God's moral government is upheld; judgment will be meted out to evil doers. Evil times are the result of evil doing; the days of blessing will return with righteousness on the part of the people. God will show that He makes a distinction between the evil and the good and the mouths of murmurers shall be stopped. The book ends with an exhortation to obey the law and the promise of the coming of Elijah (2: 17-4:6).

THE CESSATION OF PROPHECY

From Malachi to Christ, a period of about four hundred years, no prophetic voice is raised until the coming of John Baptist. Christ said of him: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, and if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." Matt. 11: 16; Mal. 4: 5. The Old Testament canon is closed, as we have it, with the book of Malachi.

To account fully for this long period of silence is not an easy task; certainly, except in the first part, the Jewish state is by no means quiet either without

or within; some things, however, are quite plain.

a. *Christ and His Mission* had been fully set forth by the prophets; His career marked out and all the plans laid.

b. *This period is specially prominent by reason of the study of the written law.* The stress of teaching is not through the living voice but through the written Word. Great care is taken with the Scriptures, the books are carefully looked over and every possible interpretation is given consideration. Ample time is allowed so that men may see the greatness of God's plan for the redemption of the world.

c. *The work of the Scribes* was very important. They were zealous champions of the integrity of the sacred law, both written and oral. "It was the duty of each to train as many disciples as possible." As it was necessary for them to act in concert in their interpretation or teaching, they were organized into a sort of guild or school.

d. *The Mission of the Synagogue* was to the Jews in all the towns and cities wherever they were found, and they were widely dispersed. The Synagogue was a meeting place on the Sabbath day where the Scriptures were read and discussed; the people were thus made familiar with their contents. The elders of the Synagogue exercised discipline and kept strict watch over the morals of each member of the flock.

e. *The Jews scattered throughout the East by means of the Persian Conquest and throughout the*

West by means of the Greek and Roman Conquests carried with them the written Law, the Scribe and the Synagogue; by means of these their religion, with its claims and Messianic hopes, was everywhere made known. A way was everywhere opened for the knowledge of Christ to spread east and west. This great preparation for the mightiest event in the history of the world must needs take time, and God took the time.

THE ORDER OF EVENTS

There are certain well-defined periods in this interval between the Old and New Testaments. The sources from which the narrative is drawn are many and authentic. We here see not only the Jewish state in the plain light of history, the fall of Persia and the rise and decline of the Grecian states, but also the coming up of the empire of Alexander the Great, its fall, and the rise of the Roman power. It is one of the most momentous historical periods: it witnesses the transfer of the scepter of power from the far East to the far West. This story begins with an empire fully established in the hands of the Persians; it ends with the Romans as masters of the world. As a consequence of this change there were great battles, sieges of cities and an overturning of states; the little Jewish nation was in the path of these war cyclones and subject to all their fury, but at the end it is there still, miraculously preserved, holding to its religion and waiting the coming of its Lord.

THE PERSIAN PERIOD

The Persian Empire lasted from 538 B. C., the fall of Babylon, to its complete overthrow by Alexander the Great in 331 B. C.

We here consider the time that elapsed from the close of Nehemiah's administration, about 430 B. C., to the beginning of the Macedonian rule in 331 B. C.

Ezra and Nehemiah left a well-organized government in Palestine, of which Jerusalem was the center. While the territory was comparatively small, yet within it "the Jewish people grew up into a vigorous and compact nation, with power both of resistance and aggression entirely out of proportion to its external circumstances. It formed a part of a province under a satrap of Syria."

During this time the power of the High Priest was growing. At first, on the return, the civil and ecclesiastical authority were kept distinct, and civil governors were appointed like Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. They were assisted by a council of elders and priests which afterwards grew into what is known as the Great Synagogue, which watched over the purity of the law and gave judicial decisions. By degrees, as this nation had no king but God, the political power passed into the hands of the High Priest. "As the religious head of a religious commonwealth, holding his office by hereditary right," he could not fail to be the most influential person in the commonwealth.

During this period there are no stirring events,

The Jews are firm in their adherence to the Persian empire and are secure in their religious rights and privileges. But it is a sad time of waiting: there is no hope of political independence and no voice of prophecy is raised to cheer them. They are compelled to look inward for consolation, and to occupy themselves by a diligent study of the law. "The principles of holiness through separation became thoroughly rooted in their nature." This time of quiet and strengthening was needed to prepare the Jews for the fearful struggle that was to come in the next periods.

THE GREEK PERIOD

From the rise of the Macedonian empire in 331 B. C. to the age of the Maccabees in 167 B. C. After conquering the East from the Nile to the Indus, Alexander the Great died in 323 B. C. Upon the death of this great conqueror the world was greatly disturbed by the intrigues of his generals for the possession of the power that had fallen from his hands. We have only to do with two of the four generals who finally agreed to divide the empire between them: Ptolemy Lagi, who received for his share Egypt and Palestine, and Seleucus, who received the whole of the East including Babylonia and Syria. Alexandria was the capital of king Ptolemy Lagi, and Antioch, on the Orontes, the capital of King Seleucus. Jerusalem lay on the high road between the empires of the two kings.

Alexandria in Egypt, which at this time was the most famous city in the world, attracted thousands of

Jews; "they not only enjoyed equal rights with the dominant Greek population, but were governed in civil matters by their own magistrates and were allowed the free exercise of all their religious customs." In this city Judaism was tinged with Greek philosophy. Jerusalem stood for the conservative party, which was represented by the Pharisees upholding the old traditions. Alexandria stood for what was thought to be a more liberal class, which was represented by the Sadducees; but this Alexandrian Judaism was not without its dangers, as it stood for the free and easy life of the Greeks to some extent.

In 285 B. C. there was begun the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures into the Greek language. This translation is known as the Septuagint. Judaism had constantly to contend with the demoralizing Greek tendencies, which were subversive of purity of life and character.

Palestine was now harried by ceaseless wars and controversies between Egypt and Syria. While well treated under the Ptolemies, Jerusalem and Palestine passing into the hands of the kings of Syria were subjected to many sore trials.

In 190 B. C. the king of Syria came in conflict with the Romans, was defeated and compelled to pay tribute. In order to meet his obligations he began to oppress his subjects and rob temples.

In 176 B. C. Antiochus Epiphanes began to reign over Syria, and he determined to introduce Greek idolatry as the religion of his empire, and then began the hard times for the Jews, for up to this period they had been allowed religious freedom. The

Jews resisted to the utmost the idolatry of the Greeks, but Antiochus Epiphanes determined to stamp out by force and power the Jewish religion. Jerusalem was besieged, taken, sacked, the walls broken down and the temple laid waste but not destroyed. The statue of Jupiter was erected on the top of the great altar of burnt-offerings and heathen sacrifices were offered (Dan. 11:31). Great multitudes of the defenseless people were massacred. Heathen altars were set up in the towns and villages and at these the people were commanded and compelled to offer sacrifices. All the distinctive observances of Judaism were prohibited on pain of death. Commissioners were sent to the country districts to see that the king's orders were observed. "Cases of disobedience were carefully searched out and punished with death." "Copies of the law were defaced and destroyed. Women who allowed their baby boys to be circumcised were strangled with their children." Persecution rose to a fearful height. The result was to draw a sharp distinction between those who really cared for Jehovah and those who did not. It seemed to devout Jews that they were living in the last times and if deliverance was to come it must come through special Divine intervention. The book of Daniel was a great comfort to these hard-pressed believers in Jehovah.

THE MACCABEAN PERIOD

From the rise of the Maccabees in 167 B. C. to the beginning of Roman dominion over Jerusalem in 63 B. C.

The Jews have a proverb, "When the tale of bricks

is doubled then comes Moses." Just as all hope seemed to be gone a deliverer came in the person of the aged priest Mattathias, who raised the standard of revolt at Modin, about eighteen miles northwest of Jerusalem. Then began one of the most marvelous and brilliant periods in the history of the Jews, in which they gained and held their political and religious independence for many years against overwhelming odds. Mattathias had five noble sons who joined him, and many followers rallied to his standard. At first he carried on an irregular warfare, for he was practically without resources; at length, growing strong, he defeated Syrian army after Syrian army sent against him. He recaptured Jerusalem, cleansed the temple and set up the daily sacrifice, defying the whole power of the empire. Upon the death of Mattathias, his son Jonathan was elevated to the High-Priesthood, about 152 B. C. Upon his death his brother Simon succeeded him, and Simon's son John Hyrcanus succeeded him. John Hyrcanus, although he never assumed the title of king, raised the Jewish state to its highest political point and splendor since the days of Solomon. He recovered most of the historic territory. Since the revolt of the ten tribes no Jewish sovereign ever reigned over so large a territory. This great ruler died in 106 B. C. and was succeeded by Aristobulus I., who was the first prince of this house to assume the title of king; he died in 105 B. C. He was succeeded by his brother Alexander Jannaeus; this king was inclined to Greek customs and manners; he was very unpopular

Under him a civil war broke out. After his death Alexandra, his wife, came to the throne, and his eldest son, John Hyrcanus II, was made High Priest. Queen Alexandra sought an alliance with the party of the Pharisees. When she died civil war again broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees who espoused the cause of the youngest son of Alexandra, Aristobulus. The Sadducees represented at this time those who sought to bring in the Greek customs. Hyrcanus II., a man of little ambition, and desiring only peace, abdicated in favor of his younger brother Aristobulus, who ascended the throne. He might have made a good king and ruled well in spite of his party, but Antipater, an Idumaeen, an advisor of Hyrcanus II., persuaded him that his brother sought his life; then arose troubles the end of which was an appeal to the Romans.

THE ROMAN PERIOD

From the taking of Jerusalem in 63 B. C. by the Romans to the birth of Christ.

The result of the appeal of the two brothers to the Roman general Pompey was the siege of Jerusalem. A horrible carnage followed the taking of the city. Pompey left the Temple and its treasures intact and set Hyrcanus II. upon the throne. He was given not the title of king but that of Ethnarch. The Jews were assured of their religious privileges, but having tasted political liberty and roused by the Messianic hopes which seemed stirring in the air, they made many desperate attempts to gain their freedom. It

seemed an anomaly that a people so favored as they had been by Jehovah should be ruled by a heathen nation. Religion occupied a larger space in their minds than ever and they felt that they must free themselves and be ready for the coming Messianic King. Now there came in a new element: Antipater, the Idumaeen, was the evil genius not only of Hyrcanus II., but also of the nation. When Julius Caesar came into Egypt in 48 B. C. he hastened to him with a body of troops offering his allegiance; in consequence he was made the governor of Judea, Samaria and Galilee. Herod his son (Herod the Great) succeeded him, but this period was not without its serious troubles. Jerusalem refused to accept Herod as king: the result was a second siege of Jerusalem in 37 B. C. which was fearful in its chapter of horrors. After the taking of the city, Herod respected the religious freedom of the Jews and began to rebuild the temple in 20 B. C. This structure was not fully completed until 60 A. D., a few years before it was destroyed.

Thus briefly we have traced this stirring history. Only the merest outline has been attempted, but underneath all the troubles we can see that the spiritual life has been strong and vigorous, and when need came, as in the time of the Maccabees, men in abundance were not wanting to do and dare for the cause.

THE COMING OF CHRIST

. At length, in the fulness of time, Christ came. There was one language everywhere spoken, the

Greek. There was one people everywhere dispersed, the Jews. There was one nation everywhere in authority, the Romans. The storm and stress was for the moment over and the world was at peace. Kings, empires and powers had sought to overthrow the small Jewish nation, out of which was to come Christ, and all had failed. The Roman nation little thought, when they thought at all of the Jews, that out of that despised nation would arise a King, who, without arms or armies, would conquer the Roman empire, and when that fell still continue in His victorious career as ruler of the nations.

QUESTIONS

Who was Malachi? When did he deliver his message? What were the contents of his prophecy? Give some reasons for the cessation of prophecy. What was being done in the long years of silence? What can be said of the order of events? Give the time and characteristics of the Persian period; the Greek period; the Maccabean period; the Roman period. What can be said of the coming of Christ?

PERIOD V

CHRIST ON EARTH

CHAPTERS

- XVII. THE ADVENT OF THE MESSIAH
- XVIII. THE LIFE OF CHRIST ON EARTH
- XIX. THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION
- XX. SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

XVII

ADVENT OF THE MESSIAH

Scripture: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

THE COMING OF CHRIST

The central figure in the Bible is Jesus Christ the most important themes are those which gather around Him. "His life did not begin at Bethlehem (Jno. 1: 1; 8: 58), He was from eternity. He came into the world with His life plan foretold, and moved in obedience to old and sacred words of prophecy . . . Many men grope from littleness step by step into greatness; but He came into the world with a plan He never amended." ("The Incarnate Savior," p. 4, W. R. Nicoll, LL. D.) Before His birth His mother was told to call His name "Jesus," because He was to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1: 21). Other children are enigmas, but this child had a definite programme to carry out. He was born to fight with sin and to conquer it.

With the advent of Christ the long period of waiting was ended. The more we study not only the history of the Jews but also of other nations the more plain it becomes that all things were prepared for His coming.

THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST

All the world is interested in the discussion of the life, character and mission of Jesus Christ; other subjects fill our minds and hearts now and then, but we ever come back to this: who is Christ? what did He do? what are His mission and claims? These are living questions which can never die.

The Scriptures are filled with the thought of His supremacy. He is proclaimed and received as the Messianic King so long foretold by all the prophets, the hope and expectation of Israel and of the whole world. John declares that He is "King of kings and Lord of lords." Rev. 19: 16. The wise men from the East asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" The people cried out when He rode in triumph into the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19: 38), "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." Zechariah (9: 9) declared long before His advent, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; behold thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation."

The astronomer asks that you give him three points in the movement of a star that he may calculate its orbit. We read in Numbers 24: 17, "There shall come a star out of Jacob." Let us take three points in the movements of the God-man, and note the vastness of His orbit.

1. He was certainly expected as the Messianic King
2. He was proclaimed as the Messianic King.
3. He rules to-day as the Messianic King.

CHRIST EXPECTED AS THE MESSIANIC KING

Before Jesus came there was a well-defined expectation of His advent. When a king would visit any part of his realm, messengers are sent before to prepare for his coming.

a. *The Hebrew prophets* proclaim in no uncertain tones the coming of the Messianic King and the glory of His Kingdom. Over 330 prophecies and quotations from the Old Testament are cited in the New Testament. Only a few of the many can be mentioned here; they will be sufficient, however, to show how strong the Messianic hope was.

The place of Christ's birth was revealed to Micah (5:2): "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

The coming of the wise men to Christ's birth was foretold: "And the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising." Is. 60:3. "The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts." Ps. 72: 10.

The Christ child is proclaimed king: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and

upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." Is. 9: 6, 7.

Christ is to have a universal kingdom: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass." Zech. 9: 9. "And His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." Zech. 9:10.

Christ is to have an everlasting kingdom. Daniel said (7: 14): "And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

b. *Heathen writers confirm this expectation.*

Suetonius, a Roman writer, said: "An ancient and settled persuasion prevailed throughout the East at this time, that the Fates had decreed some one to proceed from Judea who should attain universal empire."

Tacitus, the well-known Roman historian, said: "Many were persuaded that it was contained in the ancient books of their priests that at that very time the East should prevail and that some one should proceed from Judea."

The Persians seemed to have, according to those who have studied this question, a strong belief before the coming of Christ that a great one should arise in Judea.

c. *Christ's coming as King was anticipated; it was*

no chance, when He entered upon His work. He knew what it was to be and what He was to do.

He was to inaugurate a spiritual kingdom. There had been a succession of empires founded on brute force such as Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Persia; there had been empires having for their basis reason and art like Greece, the supremacy of law like Rome, but all had fallen or were about to fall; now Christ came to found an empire upon love of God to man and man to God and man to man; a universal kingdom which was to last forever.

The Jewish nation was brought into existence and built up to be the people through whom Christ should come. We notice two strongly marked periods in this preparation for the coming of Christ: first, the Hebrews were isolated from other peoples; from their beginning up to the time of their captivity, they dwelt apart; relations with other nations were discouraged by the prophets and leaders; the work of this period was to reveal and teach the world religion to the chosen people and prepare them for the coming Messianic King. Second, they were taken from their land into captivity, although some returned to Jerusalem at the time of the restoration, yet a number remained. When peaceful times came to them in Jerusalem, many went down to Alexandria in Egypt. The Persian empire having fallen, many of the people were scattered in other cities, so that when Christ came the Jews were dwellers in all the cities of the East and West. By means of this dispersion of the Jews other nations were prepared for

the coming of Christ, for they took their religion, with the synagogue and sacred writings, everywhere.

d. *The character of the Messianic Kingdom* is set forth in Isaiah 11:1-10, where its righteousness, goodness and glory are exploited.

e. *The strength of the Kingdom* is told by Daniel (2:44): "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." See Rev. 19:16; Matt. 25:32.

CHRIST PROCLAIMED KING

He came as the Messianic King. The supremacy of Jesus is strongly maintained by the writers of the gospels. Christ ever talks about His Kingdom, what it is like, the conditions of entrance, and who will be worthy to have a place in it.

a. *He claimed to be the Messianic King* (Matt 26:64; 27:11, 37; 26:53, 54), and to be the Christ (Matt. 16:16, 17), the Son of the Living God. He said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jno. 14:6. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Jno. 14:9. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Matt. 24:35.

b. *Divine titles* given to Him. Rom. 9:5. "The word was God." Jno. 1:1. "My Lord and my God." Jno. 20:28. "Who is over all, God blessed forever." Rom. 9:5. "God was manifest in the flesh." 1 Tim. 3:16. "But unto the Son He saith,

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Heb. 1:8.
 "This is the true God." 1 Jno. 5:20.

c. *Divine attributes ascribed to Him.* (a) Eternity. Jno. 1:2. (b) Unchangeableness. Heb. 1:11. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday and to-day, and forever." Heb. 13:8. (c) Everywhere present. Jno. 3:13; Matt. 18:20. "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28:20. (d) Perfect knowledge of God and man. "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." Matt. 11:27; Jno. 2:23-25. (e) All powerful. "Upholding all things by the word of His power." Heb. 1:3. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Rev. 1:8.

d. *Divine works wrought by Christ.* (a) Creation. Jno. 1:3-10. "All things were created by Him." Col. 1:16, 17. "For by Him were all things created." (b) Upholds all things. "Upholding all things by the word of His power." Heb. 1:3. (c) Miracles. (d) Judgment. Matt. 25:31, 32. "Before Him shall be gathered all nations."

e. *Supreme worship to be paid to Christ.* Matt. 28:19. "All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." Jno. 5:23; Jno. 14:1; Acts 7:59, 60; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:5, 6.

f. *He taught with authority.* "I say unto you."

g. *He was not a seeker after the truth, but The Truth.*

h. *He had supreme power over nature, disease, man and sin.*

i. *He appealed to His works.* When John Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask Him, "Art thou He that should come?" "Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Matt. 11: 4, 5. See Matt. 16: 13-17.

CHRIST RULES AS KING

Since the resurrection and after the ascension Jesus rules the world as the Messianic King. The fame of most great men begins to wane upon their death, but the fame of the God-man began at once to grow greater when He took His bodily departure from the earth.

a. *Christ was the Messianic King to the early Christians.* He appeared at once as the rising power. So fast did His Kingdom spread that the Roman empire was compelled to take official notice of it. The whole power of the state was put forth to crush this Kingdom and those who acknowledged its supremacy above the Roman authority. Storm after storm of persecution swept over this Kingdom of faith in Christ, but still it remained and grew on greater and more powerful until finally it conquered the empire of Rome.

The invisible yet invincible Kingdom of Christ has left indelible marks upon the history of these times; not only do Christian writers teem with the wonder-

ful accounts of the early conquests of the Messianic King but heathen writers as well give us graphic descriptions of the efforts of Rome to conquer the rising power.

The Catacombs about Rome, where millions of bodies of the early followers of Jesus lie buried, bear strong testimony to the belief of the faithful in the supremacy of Christ. He is their Lord and their God; the Divine King.

b. *Christ is Lord of lords over all civilizations.* The life of a man-made religion is bound up with the civilization in which it is born. When Nineveh and Babylon fell their religions died. The divinities, Isis and Osiris, are no more because old Egypt is dead. Jupiter, Juno, and the pantheon of gods of Greece and Rome are now simply curiosities of religion.

But when Jerusalem was besieged, taken and put to fire and sword, Christ lived on; when the Roman civilization went down, still the Christian religion lived, superior to state, time and place. Empires and kingdoms have risen and fallen since then but Christ is reigning yet, the same yesterday, to-day and forever. This religion is not racial but universal, not for a time but for eternity, not for one people but for all nations; superior to all, for allegiance to Christ is to the millions who trust in Him above that to any earthly king or ruler.

"There is but one banner in all the world that has never been furled and never will be furled and that the banner of the Son of God."

The nations have chosen for their symbols beasts and birds of prey, the Russian Bear, the English Lion, the American Eagle, etc., but the symbol of the Christian kingdom is the Prince of Peace.

Go now and look into the face of that little child born in a manger in the lowly town of Bethlehem and prophesy, if you dare, that within two thousand years He will be exalted to this high position among men and nations. See the limited area of His life-work and the limited means, and humanly you will say that it is impossible for Him to be so glorified. But the prophets believed and proclaimed it (Is., ch's 53 and 60). The heavens told the story to the shepherds with a choir of singing angels. The wise men asked for the King.

c. *Christ is king of the ages.* Time, which dulls and tarnishes the reputations of most men, antiquates and destroys institutions and states, only makes the glory of Jesus shine the brighter.

We count time B. C. and A. D., before He came and since He came. All state papers, all newspapers, periodicals and letters remind Infidel and Christian of the day of His advent upon earth. It is for us as though time began when Jesus was born.

Go again and stand beside that manger cradle and see this child born in poverty and to a hard life and prophesy, if you dare, that within a few centuries, nations would cease to count time from their own founding and forget their origin in the beginning of His Kingdom. Yet the prophets believed and proclaimed His greatness and glory, His rule

over the whole earth, a kingdom of righteousness and power, of deliverance from temptation, despair and sin.

All opposition must go down before this Kingdom. All sorts of plans for the overthrow of this rule have been set on foot, all sorts of schemes to take its place, but they have failed and are destined to fail; for He must increase, He must prevail, as He is Lord of Lords.

QUESTIONS

Who is the central figure in the Bible? Did Christ's life begin at Bethlehem? What can be said of the kingship of Christ? Was Christ expected as the Messianic King? How was He proclaimed by the Hebrew prophets? How do heathen writers confirm the expectation of His coming? How was His coming as King foretold? What can be said of the character and strength of His Kingdom? How was Christ, when He came, proclaimed as King? What did He say about Himself? What Divine titles and attributes were ascribed to Him? Were Divine works wrought by Him? How does Christ rule as King? What was He to the early Christians? How is He Lord over all civilizations and of the ages?

XVIII

THE LIFE OF CHRIST ON EARTH

Scripture: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

THE CONDITION OF THE AGE

In order to understand the meaning and the greatness of the work of Christ it is necessary to study the times in which He lived. Not only the state of the Jews, but also the state of the Romans and Greeks. Jesus came as the long-predicted Messiah, through the Hebrew people, to all nations and races. He declared that He alone had the secret of salvation. He claimed pre-existence. He said, "before Abraham was, I am." He proclaimed the great fact of His equality with the Father: "I and My Father are one." He is the Savior of the world.

But while Jesus is from everlasting and His mission is to all men, He came to this earth in a particular time and lived for a certain number of years under a well-known government. The particular mission of Christ was to save men from evil and sin and to set up a spiritual kingdom.

The darkness of the times in which Christ came, when viewed from a religious and moral standpoint, is appalling. After all allowances are made, heathen

society presented an example of terrible demoralization.

a. *The Romans and Greeks.* Seneca, the great Roman philosopher, thus characterizes his age: "All things are full of crimes and vices. More is perpetuated than can be removed by force. There is a struggle to see who will excel in iniquity. Daily the appetite for sin increases, the sense of shame diminishes. Casting away all respect for right and justice, lust hurries whithersoever it will. Crimes are no longer secrets; they stalk before the eyes of men. Iniquity has so free a course in public, it so dominates in all hearts, that innocence is not only rare—it does not exist at all. It is not a case of violations of law in individual cases, few in number. From all sides, as at a given signal, men rush together, confounding good and evil." (De Ira, 2: 8.) He follows with a long list of the revolting forms of iniquity which were displaying themselves on every hand. This but confirms the awful picture drawn by Paul in his epistle to the Romans (1: 24–32).

This ancient world, rich in material resources, splendid buildings and men of intellectual ability, was dying through moral degeneracy. If a magnificent environment could have helped men to better lives and saved them, the world would not have needed a Savior. As it was, this old civilization was like a gilded palace full of dead men's bones.

b. *The corruption of worship and morals* was so bad that the details would not be suffered to pollute the pages of a modern book. That moral evil which

we put under the ban, and strive to extirpate, was made a part of the worship not only of the Babylonians, but also of the Greeks and Romans. As the gods and goddesses were guilty of disgraceful practices, the lives of many of their worshipers did not rise above their level. This pollution in worship tinged the prevailing philosophy. The great Plato had his mind so blinded to the sacred marriage relations that he makes a community of wives a characteristic of his ideal republic. Socrates was so dull to great moral distinctions that we find him making a visit to Theodota, an evil woman, and giving her advice, how she can best retain her friends. No wonder that men came to disbelieve in honor and virtue when such examples were set before them. Men followed the evil gods which had been set up by evil men. Metellus Macedonicus spoke of marriage as an oppressive burden. Marcus Cato did not hesitate to part with his wife and hand her over to his friend. Cicero divorced his wife because he wanted to marry a young woman of wealth; her also he soon divorced. As the men in the higher walks of life became corrupt those in the lower classes were a festering mass of iniquity.

c. *Human life was considered of little value.* In warfare the lives and property of the captured belonged to the victors. When a town or city was taken, the inhabitants were put to the sword if they stubbornly resisted, otherwise they were sold as slaves. No distinction was made between those who bore arms and non-combatants.

The right of parents to destroy their children, if they so chose, was conceded. Both Aristotle and Plato approved this right.

d. *Slavery*. In Greece the number of slaves far exceeded the free population. There was little or no care or protection for those held in bondage. Those who worked in the mines wore fetters. The Greek could beat or maim his slave with impunity.

Rome was full of slaves, the result of conquests in every quarter of the globe. The Roman law gave to the master the absolute power to do what he pleased with his slave, to work, to use for base purposes, to torture or to kill. The slave could own no property, and could not marry. The abuses that arose from this state are chapters of horrors. Some Romans hired professional whippers to beat their slaves. The petulant, haughty lady would put the lash upon the bare shoulders of the maid who dressed her hair. Cato would take a whip himself after dinner and chastise all the slaves whom he thought had neglected their duty. The life of a slave was considered of little or no value. If a master was murdered, all his slaves, whether guilty or not, might be ordered to be crucified.

e. *Amusements* were not only evil, but cruel and bloodthirsty. The subjects of comedy in the plays at the theater were often taken from the licentious mythological plays. The pantomimes were as bad.

The shows in the circus could not satisfy the populace unless some one was killed to appease their thirst for the sight of blood. Hence gladiators were

trained to fight with each other to the death. Men contended with wild beasts and wild beasts fought with each other. The circus was a slaughter house. Real battles were fought in which a large number of men were engaged upon each side. Men must be mangled and torn and die in the arena to make a Roman holiday: this was the ancient idea of sport.

Cruelty and licentiousness were the great vices of the old world. (For a fuller presentation of this subject see "The Beginnings of Christianity," pp. 191-220, Prof. G. P. Fisher, D. D.)

THE WORK OF CHRIST

Christ came through the Jewish nation as the Savior of the world. The Romans had dominion over the Jews and He came in contact with this great empire. He gave commandment to go out into this sin-cursed world and to conquer it. There were not only the shameless vices of Rome, but there was likewise the formalism and indifference of the Jews. The Jewish people were not desiring or expecting the spiritual kingdom of Christ, but were looking, as it seems from the narrative, for a great king who would release them from the Roman yoke and place them as the ruler of all nations with the Messianic King as the supreme king of the world sitting upon an earthly throne. The greater and grander task of Christ, while fully set forth by the prophets, seems to have been lost to their sight.

The splendid work of Christ in lifting up this old world can here be specified only in a few particulars.

a. *The purity and holiness of the objects of worship.* We adore, through Christ's teaching, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; to worship these calls out that which is highest and best in our natures. The old fiction gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome which had their temples everywhere, and corrupted men by their worship, have passed into oblivion. But we have this worship of purity, holiness, truth and justice in God, only through Christ; without Him we would simply be where the heathen nations are to-day.

b. *He emphasized the value of human life.* Christ has revolutionized the world. War is carried on only between combatants; when a town or city is taken it is not given over to sack and ruin, neither are the inhabitants sold into slavery. Hospitals are erected into which the wounded of both sides are taken and cared for.

Slavery with its awful horrors has been abolished in every Christian country, and they are bringing pressure to bear on non-Christian countries to abandon the practice.

Children can no longer be treated as having no rights but are amply protected.

Amusements, while there is much to be desired, have no longer the cruel, bloodthirsty and licentious character of the old Roman world.

c. *And the cry is for further reforms.* Christ is still far in advance. Surely He is the Savior and cleanser of the world. He stands for all that is highest and best, and continually leads us on. Jean

Paul says of Him, that: "He is the holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the holy, lifting with His pierced hands empires off their hinges, turning the stream of centuries out of its channels, and still governing the ages."

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

That Christ lived in Palestine and was regarded and worshiped as God is one of the best attested facts of history. If we had no New Testament, still this fact would stand. The heathen writers, Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny, all agree in this matter. Tacitus speaks of the Christians as "a great multitude." That the early believers in Christ were persecuted to the death for putting their faith in Him as God is conceded by all.

We have the more particular historic account of Christ's life in the four gospels. This life may be divided into five periods:

a. *The period of nativity and youth.* From Christ's birth to His entrance upon His work at thirty years of age.

Christ's parents lived in Nazareth, but He was born in Bethlehem of Judea, whither His parents had gone to be taxed according to the decree of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2: 1-7).

The family was poor, although of the royal house of king David.

The group about the child Jesus was a notable one. The shepherds heard the wonderful song of the angels, "For unto you is born this day in the city of

David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2: 11), and hastened to do homage to the marvelous child. Simeon and Anna predicted (Luke 2:25-38) that this babe was the chosen one to redeem Israel and save the Gentiles. The wise men came from the far East bringing gifts and asking their way, saying: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:1, 2), for they had seen His star in the East and had come to worship Him. "We know from the calculations of the great astronomer Kepler, that at this very time there was visible in the heavens a brilliant temporary star." The narrative is very explicit upon the point that this is the predicted Messiah. The angel, before the birth of Christ, had announced to Mary that she should call His name Jesus, "for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

On account of the hostility of Herod, the holy family flees into Egypt, but soon returns and takes up its abode at Nazareth (Matt. 2:8-23).

After the stirring events that took place at Christ's birth, the curtain rises but once upon His life during those long thirty silent years, and that is when He is twelve years of age. He is found, having gone up to Jerusalem with His parents, talking with the learned doctors in the temple, "both hearing them and asking them questions." Luke 2:42-52.

In these years at Nazareth Jesus was preparing for His great task. He had but three years in which to do His work; and when we remember how quickly three years pass in an ordinary lifetime and

how little can be accomplished by an ordinary man, we recognize in Him more fully than ever the God who visited this earth.

b. *The period of obscurity.* This year Christ spent mostly in Judea. The events are recorded (with incidental mention in the other gospels) by John. We have here: The Baptism (Matt. 3:17). The temptation (Matt. 4:1-11). The testimony of John the Baptist (Jno. 1:19-35). The first miracle (Jno. 2:1-11). The first passover and the cleansing of the temple (Jno. 2:13-23). The discourse with Nicodemus (Jno. 3:1-21). The ministry in Judea and departure for Galilee (Jno. 2:13-4:3). The call of Andrew, Peter, James and John (Matt. 4:18-22).

Jesus, during this period, was comparatively unknown and was obliged to make His way against strong opposition and ignorance of claims. He shows His power and reveals the nature of His Kingdom and the conditions of entrance into it.

The ministry of this year is an appeal to the Jewish people to receive Him as the Messiah. The covenant of God with the Jews was a national one and the acceptance or rejection of Christ's claims must be national. Finding little or no response on the part of the leaders and rulers (although a large response on the part of the people) He turns from Judea to spend the next eighteen months in Galilee.

This period "begins with the first followers, Jno. 1:35-37, and ends with the return to Galilee, Jno. 4:43, 44."

c. *The period of popularity.* This year Jesus

spent in Galilee. Capernaum on the lake was His headquarters; from this place He made frequent trips over the province.

During this time His labors were incessant and soon the whole country was ringing with His fame. Crowds flocked to Him from all quarters. He performed many miracles. He set forth the nature of His Kingdom. He might have placed Himself at the head of a great national movement had He been willing to lower Himself to the grossly materialistic conceptions of the people in regard to His Kingdom, but He sought rather to show them the spiritual and true nature of His Messianic mission.

The great events are: The setting forth of the new dispensation and its contrast with the old in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7); The power of the kingdom is shown by miracles (Matt. 8, 9); The calling and the training of the twelve apostles for their work (Matt. 10); The testimony of the works of Jesus to His mission (Matt. 11); The characteristics of the kingdom are shown by Parables (Matt. 13).

This period "begins with the rejection at Nazareth, Luke 4: 14-30, and ends with the discourse on the Bread of Life, Jno. 6: 25-71."

d. *The period of opposition.* Six months of this year were spent in Galilee; the rest of the time in other parts of the land. The Jews now set themselves to oppose Jesus because they could not or would not understand the spiritual nature of His Kingdom; the bitter hostility of the leaders of the nation

culminated in the death of Christ and brought about His triumph in the resurrection. Jesus would have given the Jews a spiritual kingdom far surpassing their grandest conceptions of an earthly kingdom, but they would have none of it. Many mighty works were done in this year, but everything betokened that the end was near at hand. Christ fully understood what was to come to pass and began to prepare His disciples for that which He would accomplish at Jerusalem in His crucifixion, death and resurrection.

The great events are: The declaration of the Deity of Christ by Peter (Matt. 16:16); The testimony of God to the mission of His Son at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8); The prediction of Jesus of His sufferings and death (Matt. 16:21; 17:22, 23); The Passion Week; that which took place during this time, from the riding in triumph into the city of Jerusalem until Christ is crucified, is related with much fulness by the writers of the gospels. In the teaching of this week of parables and discourses and the last instructions to His disciples we gain a close insight into His Kingdom and what He has done for us. The chief things to be noted during The Passion week are: The triumphal entrance into Jerusalem on Sunday, The cleansing of the Temple on Monday, The last day of Public Teaching at Jerusalem in the Temple on Tuesday, A day of Seclusion at Bethany on Wednesday, The Last Supper and the Agony in Gethsemane on Thursday, The Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus on Friday (Matt. 21-27; Mark 11-15; Luke 19:30-23:56; Jno. 12:12-19:42).

e. *The period of triumph.* When Jesus died upon the cross and rose again from the dead, He began a new work. The resurrection and ascension will be considered in the next lesson.

THE NARRATIVES OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

The gospel appears in the New Testament in four forms: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The first three are mostly concerned with the work of Christ in Galilee, the fourth with what Christ did in Judea.

a. *Matthew* was the son of Alphaeus. Before he was converted he was a tax-gatherer. As an apostle of Christ, he had special opportunities to know about that which he wrote. We see in this book how the promises given to the patriarchs and the children of Israel, the law revealed to Moses, the predictions of the prophets and the history of the nation find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the promised Messianic King. Matthew wrote this book in Judea about the year 60 A. D.

In the analysis of this gospel, after the introduction (1-4:16), we find that it falls naturally into two parts, each preceded by the same words, "From that time." The first section (4:17-16:20) marks the beginning of Christ's active ministry. The second section, the commencement of His passion (16:21-28:20).

We subdivide these great divisions:

1. The introduction (1-4:16). We have here set forth the birth of Jesus from the royal line of David, the coming of the wise men to worship Him, the

nerald of the King, John Baptist, the testimonies of John Baptist and the Holy Spirit to the mission and works of Christ at the baptism, and the temptation of Christ.

2. Signs and works of the Messianic Kingdom (4: 17-16: 20). Jesus now begins to preach. He shows the purpose for which He came and who He is. He calls the apostles (4:18). He sets forth the principles of His Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount (5-7). He shows the power of His Kingdom in His miracles (8, 9). The twelve apostles are sent forth to preach (10). That Christ is the promised Messiah is shown by His works (11, 12). The nature of Christ's Kingdom is set forth in a series of parables (13, 14). The contrast or difference between Christ's Kingdom and Jewish legalism is noted and marked (15-16:12). All these things lead up to the great declaration, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16: 13-20).

3. The Passion of the Kingdom (16:21 to the end). Christ predicts His sufferings and death (16: 21; 17:22; 20:18; 26:1, 2). Christ's teaching about the Kingdom in the presence of humiliation and death (16: 21-28). The transfiguration, the exaltation of Christ and the teaching that followed (17-20). The triumphal entry into Jerusalem; parables and discourses; the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and the picture of the general judgment (21-25). The last supper, the betrayal, the trial, the crucifixion (26, 27). The final triumph and victory in the resurrection (28).

b. *Mark* was the son of a certain Mary who lived in Jerusalem. Her house was a rallying-point in those times. She seems to have been a person of means and influence among the early Christians. Mark had close association with Paul (Col. 4:10; Philemon 24) and Peter (1 Peter 5:13) and other leaders in the early church. He enjoyed exceptional facilities for knowing the truth about Christ. He wrote in Italy about 62 A. D. Christ is presented as a mighty worker whose will is law. He is master not only of the seen but the unseen universe. His Kingdom is omnipotent and everlasting.

This book is naturally divided into six parts:

1. The advent of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1:1-13).

2. The kingdom of God proclaimed in Galilee. (1:14-9). Christ shows what the Kingdom of God is; He begins to teach with authority (1:22). He shows His Divine power in His words and works; He heals all manner of disease and forgives sin (1:14-3:35). The growth and destiny of the Kingdom is set forth in the hearts of men and the world (4:1-34).

The power of Christ and the activities of His Kingdom are made known (4:35-8:26). The great confession of the Deity of Christ is followed by the transfiguration and the prophecy of Christ's passion (8:27-9:50).

3. The kingdom of God is proclaimed in Judea (10).

4. The triumphant King enters Jerusalem as the

long-expected Messiah. He cleanses the temple. He teaches the true nature of His Kingdom (11: 1-13: 37).

5. The Suffering King. Jesus now enters under the shadow of the cross. We have here the anointing, the Lord's Supper, the betrayal, the trial, the crucifixion and death (14, 15).

6. Christ the victorious King and ascended Lord (16).

c. *Luke* wrote, probably in Caesarea, about the year 63 A. D. He was a companion of Paul in a part of his missionary journeys and was with him in his first and second Roman imprisonment. The world-wide character of Christ's mission is vividly portrayed. Christ is shown to be the Divine Savior of both Jew and Gentile. He is the ideal Divine man: the Savior not of one nation but of all nations. Here are glad tidings to all men. The songs with which the gospel opens are alone given by Luke. The Magnificat or song of Mary, the Benedictus or song of Zacharias, the Nunc Dimmittis or song of Simeon, also the Ave Maria and the Gloria in Excelsis, the song of the angels.

The analysis of this book shows six natural divisions:

1. The literary preface or reasons for writing the book (1:1-4).

2. The Advent of Christ, the Divine Savior of the world (1:5-4:13). We have here, the birth of John Baptist the forerunner of Christ; the birth, infancy, boyhood and manifestation of the Savior;

the preaching of John Baptist; the announcement of Jesus as the Messiah and Christ's victory over temptation.

3. The work of the Savior for the Jewish world (4: 14-9: 50). He preached in the synagogue at Nazareth and proclaimed Himself as the Messiah; He is rejected (4: 14-30). He still continues to offer Himself as Messiah; He does many mighty works in the city of Capernaum and its vicinity; He calls twelve apostles; He lays down the principles of His Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. The development and growth of the Kingdom is shown (4: 31-8: 56). The apostles are sent out to preach the Kingdom (9: 1-17). This division closes with the declaration of His deity, "The Christ of God," the prediction of His death, the transfiguration, and the renewed prediction of His passion (9: 18-50).

4. The work of the Savior for the Gentile world (9: 51-18: 30). Much of the matter contained in this section is peculiar to Luke. Jesus, on His way to Jerusalem, sends out seventy disciples to proclaim His Kingdom not only to the Jewish but to the Gentile world (9: 51-10: 24). Christ shows by the parable of the Good Samaritan, the talk with Mary and Martha, the Lord's prayer and the contrast between His Kingdom and that of Satan, that He is the Savior presented to the Gentile world, to all men (10: 25-14: 35). The cause of Christ's coming was to save sinners wherever they are (15). This section closes with some parables and discourses which show reasons why men should be in earnest

about their salvation and the way to secure it (16-18:30).

5. The sacrifice of the Savior for Jew and Gentile (18:31-23:59). When Jesus approaches Jerusalem, He renews His predictions of His sufferings and death. He rides into the city of Jerusalem in triumph and declares and vindicates His authority as the Messiah. He is betrayed and crucified as the Messiah.

6. The resurrection and ascension of the Savior of all nations (24). Christ rose from the grave as He had predicted and ascended on high, the Savior of all who will come to Him.

d. *John* was one of the apostles and very dear to Christ. He writes not only with a full knowledge of the facts but with an insight into the deep spiritual nature of our Lord. He states his purpose: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (20:30, 31). The great subject of this gospel is the Divine Being who became flesh and dwelt among men (1:1). This apostle was the son of Zebedee and Salome; to him is ascribed the authorship of five New Testament books. This gospel was written in Ephesus about 98 A. D.

The book has four natural divisions:

1. The introduction. Jesus is presented as the

Divine Word, pre-existent and eternal, manifested in the incarnation, heralded by John and commended to all men.

2. Christ reveals Himself as the Eternal One. (1:19-12:50). Christ is proclaimed as the Word of God; by the testimony of John Baptist; by the disciples ("we have found the Messiah" 1:41); by the sign of a miracle; by His works and discourses (1:19-4:54).

The relation of Jesus to the Father is shown in the discourse growing out of the miracle of healing: "All men should honor the Son as they honor the Father" (5:23; 5:1-47).

The relation of Jesus to men is shown in the discourse growing out of the miracle of the feeding of five thousand: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever" (6:51; 6:1-70). The principles declared in ch. 5, 6, led to the opposition on the part of the Jews in ch. 7-12. In these Jesus makes it more and more plain that He is the Eternal Word. He says, "I am the Light of the world" (8:12). "The works I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me" (10:25). He calls the dead back to life (11). He rides in triumph into the city of Jerusalem and proclaims His mission (12).

3. The inner revelation of Christ to His disciples. We have here five chapters (13-17) which are the report of what Christ said to His disciples in the upper room just before His arrest and crucifixion.

These last words show how Jesus viewed His work and His relation to the Father; He promises the Holy Spirit.

4. The glorification of Christ. In His death and resurrection Christ becomes the source of life. The crucifixion lifts up our Lord, and in His voluntary humiliation He saves and glorifies all who believe in Him. The Word has done His work and is now our exalted Lord (18-21).

QUESTIONS

Give the condition of the age in which Christ lived; what can be said about the Romans and Greeks; the corruption of worship and morals; human life; slavery and amusements? What is the work of Christ; how did He purify worship and emphasize the value of human life? The life of Christ: into what five periods may it be divided; how are they characterized? What can be said about the narratives of Christ's life; how many are there? Give the writers, names and the analysis of their books.

XIX

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION.

Scripture: Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20, 21; 1 Cor. 15.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

This great event has changed and colored the whole history of the world and marks an epoch in the life of man on earth. As the years pass we see more clearly its immense significance.

But if we place ourselves back among the apostles just after the crucifixion and while the body of Christ was yet in the tomb—nothing was more abjectly hopeless than the cause of their Master. They seemed to have forgotten the promise that He would rise again (Matt. 16: 21; 20: 19) from the dead and only remembered that His body was in the sepulchre. If Christ had rested there, we should have had no Christian church. His memory would have remained very dear to those who had been associated with Him, but it would have gradually faded out.

The change from the depths of despair and sorrow on the part of the apostles was caused by Christ's rising from the dead; they were transformed from cowards and slow of heart to brave and courageous men. Their outward circumstances were unaltered; they

were still surrounded by the same perils, the same difficulties, but they had a new purpose before which all obstacles seemed as nothing. We can hardly estimate or appreciate, at this distance in time from that early age, the wonderful effect of Christ's reappearance upon His followers.

a. *The resurrection was necessary* to complete the work of our redemption; to show the authority of Christ, not only over the world of life where He healed the diseased, commanded forces of nature and forgave the sinner, but over the world of death. Our Lord also showed that the resurrection was in fulfillment of prophecy (Luke 24: 44-46; Ps. 16: 10).

b. *Christ foretold* that He would rise from the tomb upon the third day after His crucifixion (Matt. 16: 21; 17: 23; 20: 19; Mark 8: 31; Luke 9: 22). In the fourteenth chapter of John, at the Last Supper, Jesus talks very freely with His disciples of His death, the resurrection, the coming of the Comforter and the purpose of it all.

c. *The apostles* believed and proclaimed the *resurrection* because they had seen the living Christ. They based their preaching not upon an elaborate argument but upon a fact. They entered into no discussion of the probability or improbability of the immortality of the soul: for they had talked with, beheld and touched the risen Lord. They were certain of what they said. They were confident of success. They were bold in proclaiming the risen Lord and Savior. Never was such zeal and enthusiasm beheld before (Acts 3: 15; 4: 33).

THE APPEARANCES OF CHRIST

It is very evident that Jesus Christ intended that there should be no doubt about the fact that He had risen from the dead. He made it plain to the apostles before He was crucified that He would burst the bonds of the tomb, and after His resurrection He showed Himself freely and invited them to use every test to prove that He was the same Christ. When Thomas declared that he would not believe unless "I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side," Jesus appeared and called upon Thomas to make the test (Jno. 20: 24-29). When the apostles were terrified upon first beholding Him, supposing they had seen a ghost, He asked that they handle Him and see that it was He (Luke 24: 36-48).

The Apostle John leads us to think that there are signs and appearances which are not recorded (Jno. 20: 30, 31); he, however, declares that those which are set down were written that we might "believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

a. *Upon the first Sunday upon which Christ rose from the dead we have five recorded appearances.*

1. To Mary Magdalene (Mark 16: 9, 10; Jno. 20: 14-16). After the entombment of Jesus a watch was set (Matt. 27: 62-66), for His enemies remembered that He had said that He would rise again after three days. We do not know at what hour the resurrection took place: we read of a great earth-

quake, affrighted guards, and an angel with "a countenance like lightning" and "raiment white as snow," who rolls back the stone from the door of the sepulchre (Matt. 28: 1-7). Then came the women very early in the morning "to see the sepulchre," only to be met by the announcement of the angel that "He is risen as He said." Mary Magdalene seems to have lingered by the door of the tomb, and to her Jesus made His first appearance. The news of the fact of the empty tomb and the angel's announcement seems to have been known before Jesus revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene, and to have created a great stir.

2. To the other women. This was a few minutes later than the appearance to Mary Magdalene, and near the tomb (Matt. 28:9).

3. To two disciples (Mark 16:12; Luke 24: 13-32) as they went on their way to Emmaus talking over the wonderful things that had taken place during the last few days. Jesus met these men and first reasoning out of the Scriptures with them at last showed them that He was Christ.

4. To Peter at Jerusalem (Luke 24: 34).

5. To ten apostles assembled in a room in Jerusalem (Luke 24: 36-49; Jno. 20: 19-25). This was at the close of the first Easter day.

He here showed to the apostles that He had a real body; that He had predicted that He would rise again from the dead; that all was done in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy concerning Him and that they should go forth and preach, in His name, "re-

pentance and remission of sins," "among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." He called their attention to the fact that they were witnesses of these things and that He would send the promise of the Father upon them (Luke 24: 45-49).

b. *Upon the second Sunday we have one recorded appearance.* This is to the eleven (Jno. 20: 24-29; Mark 16: 14-18), as they were again assembled in a room in Jerusalem. Thomas was not with the apostles when Jesus first revealed Himself to them (Jno. 20: 24). He declared most emphatically that he would not believe unless he could put the claims of Christ to a very severe test; he would not accept the testimony of the others who had seen Jesus. At this point Jesus appeared and accepted the challenge. Thomas, having the evidence before him, replied, "My Lord and my God." This furnishes us with one of the strongest proofs of our faith. Christ's reply to Thomas after he is convinced is a very happy one, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (Jno. 20: 29).

c. *The other appearances.*

1. To the disciples at the Sea of Galilee. John devoted a whole chapter (21) to the description of this scene, making it the most full in the records. We see here the complete recognition of Christ and the reinstatement of Peter. Jesus again enters into loving companionship with His disciples.

2. To the eleven apostles in Galilee (Matt. 28: 16) and five hundred brethren (1 Cor. 15: 6). This was

probably the official meeting that Christ spoke of before His death (Matt. 26: 32). It was here that Christ declared: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," and it was at this meeting that He gave the great Commission to preach His gospel to all nations (Matt. 28: 18-20).

3. To James. We have a bare mention of this in 1 Cor. 15: 7.

4. The Ascension (Acts 1: 1-9; Luke 24: 50-53).

5. To Paul (1 Cor. 15: 8).

d. *The time* of Christ's stay upon the earth was, according to Luke (Acts 1: 3), forty days.

THE ASCENSION

When the time came for Christ to withdraw His bodily presence from the earth He led His disciples "out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24: 50-53). In Acts 1: 1-9 we have a still fuller account of the ascension and Jesus' parting instructions. There is also a promise that He will come again (Acts 1: 10, 11).

While in one sense Christ completed His work on earth at the ascension and it marks for us the way to heaven, in another sense He is more active in the affairs of earth than ever before. He told His disciples that He was to be always with them even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28: 20). With men the removal from the sphere of earthly activity marks the beginning of the end of their power and influence;

with Christ it is the real commencement of His activity and spread of His gospel. Soon Jerusalem and Palestine and the whole Roman empire were ringing with His name. And although nearly two thousand years have passed since the heavens received Him out of the sight of the disciples He is still in spiritual presence upon the earth comforting the heart-sore, healing the sick, rescuing the sinner, and where men are battling for His Word He is in the thick of the battle. He is in heaven interceding for us and preparing a place for us; He is in the world ever the increasing Christ until the time shall come when all nations and peoples shall bow before Him.

TEACHING

There are a number of raisings from the dead, besides that of Christ, reported in the New Testament, but they were all restorations to the old life and to the old conditions. "The resurrection of Christ was the revelation of a new life" ("The Incarnate Savior," Dr. Nicoll, p. 285). While the disciples knew Jesus to have the same personal identity and bodily appearance, and He knew them and called them by name, yet there was a difference. Christ possessed "a spiritual body uncontrolled by physical law but dominated by the spirit. He came and went at will. He withheld Himself from recognition or permitted it as He chose. With us the body limits the spirit, with Him the Spirit controlled the body." He was, however, in full sympathy with the apostles; the tomb had in no way affected His memory of earthly events. He is the

same gentle, patient, loving, all-powerful Savior; this He shows in the interview with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-32) and with Peter (Jno. 21) beside the lake of Galilee. We here see that the resurrection life "is not separate from this but in closest union with it."

"The resurrection is not an interruption but an intensifying of life, not a separation from God but an entrance into the immediate presence of the Father of spirits." A new life over which time, death and locality have no power.

Our only hope of the resurrection is through Christ (Jno. 11: 25, 26).

One of the most powerful elements in the preaching of the disciples was the resurrection of Christ.

QUESTIONS

What can be said of the resurrection and its effect on the disciples? Why was it necessary? Did Christ foretell it? How did the apostles proclaim it? What did the appearances of Christ signify? How many took place on the first Sunday; the second Sunday; how many other appearances? Give an account of the ascension and its meaning. What is the teaching of the resurrection and ascension?

XX

SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Scripture: Isaiah 9: 6, 7; The Gospels.

THE GREAT PREDICTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The prophecy found in Isaiah 9: 6, 7 ("For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government there shall be no end") embodies the sum and substance of the Messianic predictions. Isaiah's vision was not restricted to his own nation or times. He regards all nations and all times. It was a troublous age and one full of dark forebodings for Judah; the land was full of evil; the people had gone into sin; Assyria and Egypt were contending for mastery; there seemed to be little or no hope for the chosen people. If we look into the condition of things there is nothing to inspire such a magnificent prophecy of a great king who is to come from Judah and rule all; yet the prophet sees in his vision an ideal king who shall reign over both Jew and Gentile. Surely the prophet did not speak these words of any earthly king who was soon to rule from the throne of David.

THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

Isaiah was very bold in proclaiming the supremacy of Christ; he entered into particulars: His government, His name and His increase. After a lapse of over twenty-five hundred years since the death of the prophet we note the almost literal fulfillment of his prediction.

a. *"The government shall be upon His shoulder."*

The map of the future seems to have been spread before the prophet. As we now look back, so he looked forward; and he might have said: I see Assyria conquering Egypt, Babylon conquering Assyria, Persia taking Babylon, Alexander the Macedonian overcoming Persia, the rise of Rome, and the Roman empire taken by Christ, not by arms but through a new spirit of love and brotherhood sweeping away the old kingdom of force and bloodshed.

If we study the map of the earth we see that the most enlightened and civilized peoples are the Christian nations. There are about 1,500,000,000 people in the world: of this number only about 500,000,000 are called Christians; but if we look closely where the 1,000,000,000 heathen population live, we find them in Africa, China and India, the most unprogressive and backward nations. The commerce, the art, the inventions, the civilization, is with the nations which call Christ, Lord. The government is upon His shoulder and His principles are finding their way everywhere.

- b. *"His name shall be called Wonderful, Coun-*

sellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Christ the King with the fourfold name. All this has come to pass.

The words of Christ are studied to-day as the words of no philosopher or statesman were ever considered in peace and in war.

In thousands upon thousands of churches, scattered over the whole round world, Jesus is worshiped as The Mighty God and Everlasting Father.

He is the Prince of Peace, speaking not only peace to troubled and sore hearts but also shaping and counselling the nations to a policy of peace.

c. "*Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.*" Every man-made government that has ever existed has had its rise, progress, glory and decay; this is the history of them all. But here is a Divine government which has been increasing ever since it was founded and is destined to go on increasing. We have but to look at its founder cradled in a manger and note now the millions who follow Him to see how great that growth is. Nations, empires, and philosophies rise and have their little day of glory to be laid away, but the Kingdom of our Lord goes on forever.

THE POSITION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

When the writings of the New Testament are taken as evidence, there can be no doubt in regard to the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Out of many passages, only a few can be given here: Matt. 23:8-10, "One is your Master, even Christ." Matt. 28:18, "All

power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Jno. 13:13, "Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." Jno. 1:1-5, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Colossians 1:12-20, "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." Matt. 25:31-46, The Son of man shall judge all nations.

HOW CHRIST IS MASTER AND LORD

There is nothing in the family, education or circumstances of the life of Christ to account for Him. He certainly is not a product of His times. There are no elements here for a world-conqueror. Yet He steps out from His provincial surroundings to found a great spiritual empire. John the Baptist said of Christ, "He that cometh from above is above all" (Jno. 3:31). The only way to account for Christ is that He came from above: all other theories fail. Christ courted the closest scrutiny of His claims (Jno. 20:27). He said: "Believe Me for the very works' sake" (Jno. 14:11). We are to examine His record.

We judge men by their writings, character, intellectual ability, plans and works. Is Christ Master and Lord in all these?

a. *The writings of Christ.* We do not know that

He wrote anything, yet how carefully His words have been gathered up and transmitted to us. Men do not care for a handful of pebbles scattered abroad, but for diamonds thrown in like manner they search everywhere. Christ's words were too precious to be lost. Historians, poets and philosophers have written their productions with the utmost care, and taken infinite pains that they should be preserved, yet the world has consigned the most of them to its rubbish heap. The most brilliant names in literature are gradually fading out, but that of Christ as a master of literature is becoming more and more bright.

b. *The character of Christ.* Every man, no matter how brilliant, has his faults which are always more or less in evidence; the closer we come to some great men the less we see anything to be admired. But Christ, to-day, stands as a perfect character, unconvicted of sin, spotless and stainless. He said (Jno. 8:46), "Which of you convinceth Me of sin." And the verdict stands to-day, no one. He is Lord here.

c. *Intellectual ability.* The wisest judges, brought face to face with some novel construction of the law, often reserve their opinion; and even when it is given, fail to give decisions which will stand the test of time. Christ had put to Him carefully prepared questions which involved all the relations of life, such as "Who is my neighbor?" "What is the greatest law?" "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?" He instantly answered these questions and did it in such a way that the answers have been guides in these matters ever since. The eminent philosopher is often so

obscure or profound in his thinking and teaching that it takes another philosopher to understand him; but when we come to Christ's discourses they are clear cut and to the point; there is no misunderstanding here. He is master in the intellectual sphere.

d. *Plans.* Most eminent statesmen and reformers have plans for their people, state or nation alone; they do not look beyond the bounds of a very narrow horizon, or if they take into account other nations they do not consider other times. Hence the failure of so many lauded schemes. We have been told that a ballot in every man's hands was to cleanse the city and state, but under this system the worst men are often elected to office. Again we have been assured that shorter hours for labor would cure all the evils, but still strikes and lockouts continue. Universal education was to cure all crime, but we still have the evil with us. Men have tried most of the vaunted plans for the betterment of the human race and seen their practical failure. Christ's plan as set forth in His Sermon on the Mount is the only plan that has never failed. He aimed first to cleanse the heart of man of its uncleanness and sin; here is the source of all trouble. Christ is master here. He has presented the only workable plan for the permanent betterment of the race.

e. *Power.* Here He distances all men. He was a worker of miracles. Some have been bothered by the assertion of Hume that a miracle is against the order of nature, but Prof. Huxley declares that we do not know fully what the order of nature is; therefore Hume's argument falls to the ground. We must know fully

what the order of nature is to state positively that a miracle is against that order. Christ stands above and beyond all scientific men from the fact that they can only tell partially how things are done in nature; even if they wish to produce a compound or reduce it to its elements, they must have a lot of apparatus and work carefully and painstakingly to certain results. Christ spake the word and it was done.

He was the master of nature. He stilled the storm on the Lake of Galilee by a word; He blessed the few loaves and fishes and they multiplied to feed thousands. He was the master of disease and death. He touched the sightless eyes and the blind saw; He bade the lame walk; He raised the dead. All this power was used, not for Himself, but for others; it was kindly in its action and results. Most men of power use it for themselves and their own advancement. He forgave sins; that which no man ever dared to do in his own name.

Surely this was the Divine Son of God. Himself Divine, full of all power and glory. We do not wonder that Thomas said, "My Lord and my God" (Jno. 20:28).

QUESTIONS

Give the great prediction found in Isaiah. What can be said of the age in which it was given? How has this prophecy been fulfilled; in the points of Christ's government, name and increase? What is the position of the New Testament on the supremacy of Christ? How is Christ Master and Lord; in His writings or words; in character; intellectual ability; plans; power?

PERIOD VI

THE FIRST CHURCHES

CHAPTERS

- XXI. THE CHURCHES IN THE ACTS
- XXII. THE EPISTLES OF PAUL
- XXIII. THE GENERAL EPISTLES
- XXIV. THE MESSAGE OF JOHN TO THE CHURCHES

XXI

THE CHURCHES IN THE ACTS

Scripture: The Acts

THE ORIGIN

When Christ ascended and a cloud received Him out of the sight of the disciples, His work was not done on the earth; it was just beginning. He founded a kingdom and church, mighty, progressive and everlasting.

a. *The record* of the beginning of His church is found in the Acts. Christ predicted His death and resurrection; He also commanded that His gospel should be preached throughout the world, and said that the Holy Spirit would come in power to forward this great work (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8).

We follow the fortunes of the infant church quite closely in this narrative of Luke for about thirty years (33-63 A.D.) after Christ has returned to His heavenly abode. Without this history of the Acts we should be in the dark in regard to its organization and development. Luke writes from an intimate personal knowledge of the events which took place, because he was a leading actor in them. "We here watch the dawn of the gospel which the Savior preached as it broadens gradually into the boundless day."

b. *The book of the Acts*, looked at in one way, falls naturally into two great divisions: First (1-12) we have the narrative of the establishment of the church in Palestine, and second (13-28) its establishment in countries beyond Palestine. The first section is mainly occupied with what Peter did, and the second with the missionary work of Paul.

The cradle of the church is in the "upper room" in Jerusalem (Acts 1:13). In the next chapter we see it baptised with the power of the Holy Spirit (2:1) and suddenly attaining to great strength and influence. At first Christianity is regarded as a Jewish sect, but as it begins to be known, its great purposes and plans are seen and recognized and it stands clear from Judaism to begin a war for a place in the world, and that battle is not yet ended although victory has followed upon victory.

DEFINITION, FORM, PURPOSE

a. *Definition.* Different branches of the church define the word church in different ways. One of the best definitions and that which includes the essentials in all others, is as follows: "The church consists of all who acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ the blessed Savior of mankind, who give credit to His gospel, and who hold His sacraments, the seals of eternal life, in honor."

b. *Form.* "The church is a holy kingdom, established by God on earth, of which Christ is the invisible king. It is a divinely organized body, the

selves, and joined to Christ their Head by the Holy Spirit, who dwells in and animates it. It is a spiritual but visible body of men who hold the same faith as the apostles and partake of the same sacraments." While this is the Divine ideal of the church, in practice it does not always attain to this ideal.

The organization and worship of the church or churches in the early days was very simple. Believers in Christ were carefully gathered into churches at Jerusalem, Corinth, Philippi, etc.; officers were appointed; they were called overseers (Acts 20: 28), bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1), elders (Titus 1:5-7; Acts 11:30; 14:23; 20:17). The time for worship was at first every morning (Acts 2: 46), afterwards on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). The supper of the Lord formed the center of the feast of their worship (1 Cor. 11: 23-26); this was opened with a blessing and closed with a thanksgiving. It was a time of joy, hopefulness and helpfulness. The rite of Baptism was observed.

c. *The purpose of gathering believers in Christ into permanent assemblies with definite bonds and aims is plain.* Without they had been so gathered after conversion they might have lapsed back into heathenism. Again, instruction was given constantly in the Word of God; the members were upheld and sustained by a common faith and *were expected* to make known the gospel to those who had not yet heard of it. Christianity was the first great missionary religion.

THE GROWTH

The book of Acts shows in a very graphic way the rapid growth and marvelous progress of Christianity in the midst of fierce opposition. To avow oneself a Christian, for many years after the day of Pentecost, was to invite hatred and often to put one in peril of losing life itself. But the more Christians were persecuted, the greater their numbers became.

If we again turn to the Acts and divide it now into three parts, we can note very plainly the steps of progress.

a. *The Church in the city of Jerusalem* (1-7). This city was at first the center of all the activity of the disciples after Christ's ascension; they were commanded to wait here for the power of the Holy Spirit. We have in the seven chapters which constitute this stage of growth: the Day of Pentecost, the first sermon, the first baptism (1-3). The first miracle, the first persecution, the appointment of the first deacons; altogether it is a time of beginnings and foundation laying for greater things to come (4-7). The Holy Spirit is very active (2) and the principles of the church are ably and fully set forth in the speeches of Peter (2) and Stephen (7). This section closes with the martyrdom of Stephen.

b. *The Church enters Judea and Samaria* (8-12). In consequence of a great persecution which arose at this time, the adherents of the church "were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea

and Samaria" (8:1); but instead of hiding themselves they proclaimed the gospel. The means which the enemies of the church took to kill it only served to advance it to its second stage of progress. Philip preaches the word to the Samaritans (8). Saul, the persecutor, is converted (9). To Peter, it is made known that the Gentiles are to be admitted to the church of God (10; see also 10: 44). In chapters eleven and twelve we note the gradual transference of the capital of Christianity from Jerusalem to Antioch; the widening sphere of the church's influence; the renewed persecution of the Christians (12: 1-3), and the growing and multiplying power of the Word (12: 24).

c. *The Church in the Roman world or among the Gentiles* (13-28). The Holy Spirit now commands an advance and calls for Barnabas and Saul to lead in a great missionary campaign (13: 1, 2) which was to lead up to the capitulation of the Roman empire. The importance of this stage of progress and the magnificent work of Paul cannot be overestimated.

We have the records of three missionary journeys.

First: Paul with Barnabas through Cyprus, Pamphylia and Pisidia (13, 14). Second: Paul, Silas and Timothy in Asia Minor and Europe (15: 36-18: 22). Third: Through Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece (18: 23-21: 16). The rest of the Acts shows Paul's return to Jerusalem, his arrest and trial, why and how he was sent to Rome, and his work in that city.

The confirmations of the record of Luke in the Acts are many: he mentions names, places and events which in the light of subsequent research prove him to be an accurate historian.

THE FIRST PREACHERS

They were certainly effective and their preaching produced immediate and startling results.

a. *They preached the resurrection of Christ* and relied upon the power of the Holy Spirit. So far as man was concerned, they discussed the question of his repentance and belief in Christ. There were scores of so-called questions of the day: slavery, which had come to a fearful pass; the social sins, which were flagrant and open; the corruption of the officials of the empire; but they mostly refrained. When the night comes, we may discuss the relative claims of artificial lights, but when the sun appears we put them all away. The first preachers had seen Christ and He was the remedy for all evil—political, social and individual.

b. *They had a sense of the terrible nature of sin:* it followed a man and cursed him forever. They taught that sin must be burned out by the fire of the Holy Spirit. A man must not simply be educated in righteousness: he must be regenerated.

c. *They taught that man ought to obey God first* and feel his responsibility to Him. Hence they endured persecution, not because they liked persecution, but because of their loyalty to Christ; their motives were perfectly transparent. They felt and pro-

claimed that men ought to obey and serve Christ above and before all others.

d. *There is not a single despondent note or tone* in this preaching. The preachers were in the midst of an evil generation, where everything was going wrong, where churches which had been established were not acting right; but we observe no pessimism, instead, always a triumphant tone, a glad refrain, a certainty of victory.

SEEN AND UNSEEN FORCES

a. *The seen forces.* Peter, John, Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, and what they said and did are totally inadequate to account for the mighty results which are shown in the first ages of the church.

b. *The unseen forces.* The Holy Spirit and the power of Christ, supernatural forces, are adequate to account for this rapidly growing Christian community and the recognition and place which it attained. The activity of the Holy Spirit is shown in the early church by the mention of His name about fifty times in the Acts.

QUESTIONS

What can be said of the origin of the church? Give a definition of the church. What can be said of its form and purpose? Give the three stages of growth as seen in the Acts. What can be said of the first preachers? Seen and unseen forces: what is meant by them?

XXII

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

Scripture: The Epistles of Paul

THE EPISTLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

a. *Form.* "The books of the New Testament are mostly in the form of letters. In this respect the records of Christianity are absolutely unique in the religious history of the world. Of all the sacred books which the world has seen there is not one which is composed mainly, or at all, of letters with the single exception of the New Testament. The Bibles of the world—the Vedas, the Zend Avesta, the Tripitaka, the Koran, the writings of Confucius—are poems, or rythmic addresses, or legendary histories, or philosophic discourses."

b. *Reason for this kind of writings.* By means of these epistles we gain a better insight into the workings of the early churches than we could from a formal treatise or history. We see their struggles, perplexities, anxieties, and how these were dealt with by the apostles. While a number of the questions which greatly agitated the early Christians are dead questions (such as the eating of meat offered to idols), yet the principles upon which they were decided remain the same for all time. We see also

the faith of the first churches standing firm amid a storm of persecutions; yet many of the converts had but recently come out of a debasing heathenism.

c. *Number and writers.* There are twenty-one letters or epistles in the New Testament. To Paul are ascribed 13; to John 3; to Peter 2; to James 1; to Jude 1. It is uncertain who wrote the epistle to the Hebrews. We have here then at least the thoughts of six writers; four of whom were apostles and so had special and intimate knowledge of Christ. They differed in temperament and intellectual ability, but the unanimity of their agreement on things essential for the good of the churches and points of doctrine is remarkable.

d. *Occasion.* The epistles were not written after the manner of essays or by those who simply wished to express themselves upon a certain topic and sought this form in which to do it. They have a personal element and had their rise in the circumstances of the times. They discussed live questions. They were addressed to churches and individuals. Each epistle is complete in itself and was written to correct an abuse, to set forth a doctrine, to give practical advice, to express thanksgiving or to more perfectly show the way of Christ. Called forth by living interests it still lives to give instruction and carry consolation to every Christian heart.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

a. *Number.* There are thirteen in all: 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians,

Romans, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy, (or if he wrote Hebrews there are fourteen written by the great apostle).

b. *The qualifications of Paul* for writing these letters and giving instruction in the Christian faith were many.

1. He had been converted in a wonderful way and had received a special revelation from Christ (Acts 9:3-15; 1 Cor. 15:8; Gal. 1:12).

2. He had been called to his great work among the Gentiles by the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:2).

3. He had been the spiritual father of many churches and knew their wants and how to supply them. Knowing Christ and knowing the churches his letters always bore directly on the points at issue. He decided questions by reference to Christ and His doctrine.

c. *The plan* is much the same in all Paul's epistles. There is a certain orderly government.

The outlines of these letters fall uniformly into six divisions:

"1. First, a greeting, sometimes very brief, sometimes extending over several verses, in which he generally manages, with consummate skill, to strike the key-note of the whole letter.

"2. Secondly, a thanksgiving to God for the Christian gifts and graces of his converts.

"3. Thirdly, a doctrinal part, in which he argues out or explains some great topic of Christian truth,

specially required by the condition of the church to which he is writing.

"4. Fourthly, a practical section, in which he applies to daily moral duties the great doctrines which he has developed.

"5. Fifthly, personal messages, salutations and details.

"6. Sixthly, a brief autograph conclusion to ratify the genuineness of the entire letter." ("The Messages of the Book," p. 151, F. W. Farrar, D. D.)

THE FOUR GROUPS OF PAUL'S EPISTLES

CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED

The order and dates of the epistles here given are those which have received the sanction of the best scholarship.

a. *The epistles written by Paul during the second missionary journey.*

These have been called the "Eschatological epistles," because they relate to the second coming of Christ.

1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Place. Thessalonica was the chief city of Macedonia. Paul and Silas visited this place in 51 A. D. on the second missionary journey (Acts 17:2, 3). They were driven away after they had preached for three Sabbath days, but they gained some devoted friends and a church was founded.

Date and occasion of writing. Both epistles were

written at Corinth; the first probably late in 52 A. D. and the second early in 53 A. D. News had come from Thessalonica that the church had fallen into certain errors; some of the members had died since Paul's visit and it was feared that they would not see the Lord at His second coming, which was thought to be near at hand. There were also those in the church that had given up their daily work in consequence of their belief in the speedy second advent of Christ. Paul wrote explaining about the second advent and urging work and watchfulness. While the first letter produced much good, it was misunderstood in some things, hence Paul wrote a second letter showing that a speedy coming of the Lord was not probable (2 Thess. 2:1, 2) and what must take place before that great day (2 Thess. 2:3-17). He again urges to watchfulness and care in the performance of daily Christian duties (2 Thess. 3).

b. *The epistles written by Paul during the third missionary journey.*

This group of epistles represent what is known as the period of "Judaic Controversy." We here see the battle for a full and free salvation against Jewish ceremonialism; for a spiritual heart service as against an outward ritual. The supremacy of Christ is insisted upon against those who sought to impose upon the young churches the observance of the Mosaic ordinances. This controversy is especially marked in Galatians and Romans. The importance of these epistles is very great; they are the most argumentative and powerful of all of Paul's epistles;

in them he won a wonderful victory for the supremacy and purity of the Christian religion.

1 and 2 Corinthians.

Place. The first visit of Paul to Corinth was in 52 A. D. on his second missionary journey (Acts 18. 1-18). This city at that time was the largest and most important in Greece, numbering about 400,000 inhabitants. It was the meeting place for the vices of the East and West. Religion was here put to ignoble uses; the Temple of Aphrodite with its thousand priestesses ministered to a base purpose. The city was proverbial for wealth, luxury and profligacy. It is interesting to note that Paul felt that in order to do anything he must forego the discussion of every question save one. He says: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 1 Cor. 2:1, 2. He preached at first in the Jewish synagogue, but was opposed as soon as he testified of Christ. A church was founded in this city.

Date and occasion. First Corinthians was written at Ephesus early in 57 A. D. After Paul's departure from Corinth, factional parties arose in the church (1 Cor. 1:12); there were also certain moral disorders and questions of doctrine (1 Cor. 3:3). It was for the purpose of correcting these disorders and making known more fully the true doctrine of Christ that he writes his first letter to the Corinthian church. He sets forth the supremacy of Christ (1 Cor. 3:22, 23) and that we are ministers and stewards of Christ (1 Cor. 4:1). Little details are decided by great

principles. In chapters 13-15 we have a magnificent exposition of the glory of love and the doctrine of the resurrection. The key-note of this epistle is "Refer all to Christ."

Second Corinthians was probably written from Philippi early in 58 A. D. to express Paul's joy that the church had taken heed to the admonitions in his first letter. We have also here a magnificent defense of Paul's mission and a setting forth of the greatness of work done in Christ's name.

Galatians.

The country of Galatia was quite a small district in Asia Minor. It was settled by the Gauls. At first coming under the the Greeks and Greek civilization, it was finally conquered and annexed to the Roman empire. The Jews had come into this region for the purpose of trade. Paul stopped here on his second missionary journey in 52 A. D. (Gal. 4:13, 14); he again came through Galatia on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23).

Date and occasion. This epistle was written at Corinth in 58 A. D. After the organization of the churches of Galatia, certain teachers came in who taught that the Jewish law was binding on Christians as well as Jews and who tried to subvert all of Paul's teaching. In consequence some relapsed from Christ. In answer to the teachers of false doctrines Paul writes this magnificent letter. The key-note, as in Romans, is "Justification by faith" (ch. 3). He declares that he received his gospel through a revelation by Jesus Christ (ch. 1, 2). He shows conclusively

that a man is not justified by the deeds of the law but through faith in Christ.

Romans.

Place. When Paul sent this epistle to Rome he had not visited this city (Acts 19:21). He wrote this letter to show the manner and matter of the gospel which he preached (Romans 1:11-16; 15:24). It was written at Corinth in 58 A. D. It is probable that the church at Rome was founded by those who were converted at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10).

The theme is justification by faith. There are four main positions. (1) All are guilty before God. (2) All need a Savior. (3) Christ died for all. (4) We are all through faith one body in Him.

c. *The Epistles written by Paul during his first imprisonment.* These letters are what are known as the "Personal and Christological." They are especially rich in the doctrine of Christ. We pass out of the period of controversy, noted in the last epistles, and come to the letters in which we see Paul building up the faith of the churches in his and their Lord. We have the doctrine of "The Pre-existence, the Divinity, the Eternal Headship and supremacy of our risen and ascended Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Philippians.

Place. The city of Philippi was founded by King Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, and will be forever memorable as the first city in Europe in which the gospel of Christ was preached by

Paul. There was no synagogue of the Jews here, and the great apostle preached to a few women by the river-side (Acts 16:9-40). Here the apostle came into sharp conflict with "heathen paganism," which resulted in his imprisonment, a wonderful release, and the conversion of his jailer.

Date and occasion. It was written at Rome about 62 A. D. It is a letter of thanks from Paul in his imprisonment at Rome for offerings and greetings from the church at Philippi at the hands of Epaphroditus. The apostle here sets forth how the gospel has spread in Rome (1:12-18) and shows what is the Christian creed (2:1-11). In 3:2-21 there is a fine exposition of righteousness and Christian liberty; the great end to be attained is likeness to and unity in Christ. The key-note of this epistle is "Joy" (4:4), yet the man who wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord alway," was in prison and worn with great labors. It shows what the religion of Christ is.

Colossians.

Place. The city of Colossae was on the river Lycus in Phrygia. There is no known account of Paul's visit to this church.

Date and occasion. It was written at Rome about 63 A. D. It is thought that Epaphras (1:7; 4:12) on his visit to Rome told Paul about some serious errors of doctrine which were finding their way into this church. Teachers had come in who taught that man's sin was to be found in his body and not in his will; that matter is evil. United with these ideas were the narrowest Jewish ceremonialism, insistence on

circumcision, fast days, etc. To these doctrines Paul opposed the idea that evil is in our willingness or unwillingness to live the life of Christ. Redemption is through faith in Christ and not through the mortification of the body. We have here upheld the doctrine of the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ as the head of creation and of the church (1:14-17).

Philemon.

This is the only strictly private letter of Paul's that we know. It was written at the same time as the Epistle to the Colossians (4:9), from Rome about 63 A. D. It is the intercession of Paul for the runaway slave Onesimus. It shows the kindness of heart of the apostle and sets forth the great principle of brotherhood in Christ. This principle links every individual with Christ and imparts to every life a Divine sacredness.

Ephesians.

The Place. Ephesus was the great city and port of Asia, into which came, as in Corinth in Greece, the wealth, luxury, and licentiousness of the East and the West. It was the seat of the great temple of Diana and of an abominable worship. Paul came twice to Ephesus. His first visit, on his second missionary journey, was very brief (Acts 18:18-21); his second visit, on his third missionary journey, lasted for three years (Acts 20:31). He did a great work here.

Date and occasion. It was written at Rome about 63 A. D. It was not written to combat errors. We find here no heated controversy. It breathes the spirit of Christian peace. Paul is seeking to build up the

church in the faith of Christ. The subject is "Unity in Christ." This union of Christian believers in Christ is conceived and set forth, not as mechanical, but spiritual. There is a looking forward to one kingdom, one family in Christ.

d. *The epistles written by Paul during his closing years.* These have been called "The Pastoral Epistles," because they relate chiefly to the duties of the pastoral office.

Date. 1 Timothy and Titus were probably written by Paul, after his release from his first imprisonment, in Macedonia about 66 A. D. 2 Timothy was probably written in Rome, during Paul's second imprisonment, in 67 or 68 A. D.

Purpose. These epistles treat of practical matters in regard to the church and the pastoral office. The gospel is applied to the outward conduct. Great stress is laid upon the character of the church officers and the diligent study and preaching of the word.

The epistle to the Hebrews. Nothing is said of the author in the epistle itself. It has been ascribed to Paul, as it reflects his ideas so strongly. It was evidently written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D., as the temple is spoken of as standing, and the sacrifices being offered (9: 6, 7; 10: 1).

The teaching is very important. Christ is shown to be superior to the prophets, the angels, Moses and the old covenant. The law but led up to, and revealed, Christ. But the law was but the shadow, while Christ is the reality. "He is the heir of all things,"

creator of the world, the express image of God's person (1: 2, 3).

QUESTIONS

What can be said of the form of the epistles of the New Testament; reason for this kind of writing; number and writers; occasion? What can be said of the epistles of Paul; number; qualifications of Paul for writing; the plan of the epistles? What can be said of the four great groups of Paul's epistles; give the characteristics of the first group, what are they and when were they written, for what purpose; 1 and 2 Thessalonians? The second group, characteristics, date, occasion, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Romans? The third group, characteristics, date, occasion, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians? The fourth group, characteristics, date, occasion, 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy?

XXIII

THE GENERAL EPISTLES

Scripture: The Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude

THE NAME

The Epistles of Paul were addressed to specific churches and individuals; the Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude partake of the character of circular letters addressed to more than one church, hence the name General or Catholic which has been given to them. They number seven in all: James, 1; Peter, 2; John, 3; Jude, 1.

THE SIGNIFICANCE

No one man can comprehend all that is in the Gospel of Christ. In each of these epistles we see some new phase of the teaching of Christ and its application to the spiritual and daily life of the early Christians. Each has its part in the development of the church. The authors aimed not only at meeting the errors of their own times and building up the faith of the church of their age, but they laid down principles which are applicable to all times. The Epistles of Peter and John are specially valuable, as they were with Christ and they speak as hearers of His words and as witnesses of what He did when on

earth. John in his first epistle does not argue, he witnesses to the truth of Christ. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life." 1 John 1:1.

THE WRITERS

We ask of any book, who wrote it, and what opportunities did the author have of knowing about the subject of which he treats? Peter and John, who wrote five of the seven general epistles, were the two most prominent apostles of our Lord and best knew what His teachings were. Peter delivered the first sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and John was closely associated with him in the wonderful days after Pentecost. James and Jude were brothers of Jesus and hence must have had intimate knowledge of who He was and what He had done (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Acts 1:14; 12:17; 15:13; Gal. 1:19; 2:9; Jude 1).

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

a. *The writer.* James, a brother of the Lord. He was the head of the church at Jerusalem. His character is shown in the conciliatory speech which he made at the apostolic council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-21). He with others gave a reception to Paul on his return from his third missionary journey. Josephus (Antiq. 20:9) tells us that he was stoned to death (62 A. D.) for departing from the Jewish law;

he suffered martyrdom for the faith which he proclaimed.

This epistle was written at Jerusalem to Jewish Christians (1:1). There were many Jews who believed in Christ (Acts 21:20).

b. *Occasion and purpose.* It has been called the "Business Man's Epistle" because it exalts works. At first glance it would seem that works was exalted over faith, but upon closer study we see that James is striving to correct the misapprehension that faith and faith alone was necessary for salvation (2:14-26). It was the same thing which Jesus brought out when the Jews thought they would be saved because of their relations to Abraham (Matt. 3:9; Jno. 8:39). Believers are warned against a barren faith. Faith will be shown by works. But there is no mention here of Jewish ordinances.

Christ is exalted to equality with God (1:1). He is the Lord of Glory (2:1). Authority to speak is through Christ (5:10).

THE EPISTLES OF PETER

a. *The writer.* The apostle Peter.

b. *The first epistle* was written from Babylon (5:13) about 70 A. D., to the "strangers (this word means sojourners or those in Christ who tarried for a while on earth) scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1:1, 2). This apostolic letter is filled with noble and great thoughts.

The occasion of the writing seems to have been a period of trial and affliction through which the churches were passing. Peter exhorts them to stand steadfast, to endure for the sake of Christ and to show themselves worthy of their Lord (2:19-25). The fourth chapter sets forth in a masterly way the great subject of living a blameless Christian life under unmerited affliction. In suffering they should have the same mind as Christ (4:1); they are heirs of salvation and glory in Christ.

Everything is made to hinge upon the cross of Christ (1:18, 19), His sufferings (2:21), His resurrection (1:3), His manifestation (1:7) and exaltation (3:22). The words "Priest" and "Church" are not mentioned.

We see here not the old Peter, impetuous and hasty, but the new Peter now become the rock of faith, conciliatory and looking not to find his joy in outward things but in the inward apprehension of his Lord. Peter has learned to bear all things for the sake of Christ and rests in the immovable strength of his Master.

The second epistle. "The purpose as stated (3:17, 18) is to promote the steadfastness of believers in the Lord by warning them of danger which threatened faith and practice, and to urge them to seek a fuller knowledge of God and Jesus Christ (1:2-3:8) . . . There is no mention of danger from without in the shape of persecution but from the encouragement of evil living given by false teachers (2) and disbelief of the Lord's coming (3)."

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

a. *The writer* was John, the apostle.

b. *Place and occasion.* The first epistle was probably written near the close of the first century and at Ephesus. If written after John's Gospel, as it seems to have been, it is the last apostolic utterance which we have and hence it is of great importance. It resembles the Gospel of John; there are about thirty-five parallel passages. "The Gospel gives us the historic manifestation of the Word, the Epistle shows how the manifestation bears on anti-Christian errors and Christian lives."

The questions discussed in the first years of the church: whether a man could be a Jew and a Christian at the same time, the controversies about circumcision and the eating of meats offered to idols, have passed away, and we meet in this Epistle a new class of questions. Some of these questions were: Was Christ a mere man? Was His human life a "mere phantasmal semblance"? Was evil an eternal attribute of matter? etc. To these the apostle answers most fully that the eternal life was manifested in Christ. He was and is the Eternal Word of Life (1: 1-3). He was a Divine reality (5: 6). Sin is of a man's own will and can be cleansed by the blood of Christ. If we live in sin, it is our own fault and not through a necessity of our nature (1: 5-10). "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1: 9). The central object of all faith is the Word

made flesh; all difficulties and controversies vanish here; John is a witness to that which he has seen and heard (1:1). "The fundamental idea is that Jesus is the Word of God, the Son who revealed the idea of the Father." The forgiveness of sins is found in Jesus Christ. Life is found in communion with God.

The Second and Third Epistles.

We have here interesting pictures of life in the early church. These letters are evidently a portion of the private correspondence of the apostle and are interesting as showing him in that light. He is thankful for the strong faith of those to whom he writes; he warns them against false teachers and exhorts to a closer walk with God.

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

a. *The author* is Jude, brother of James (the writer of the epistle of James), and of the Lord. It is thought to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D.

b. *To whom written.* The historical allusions are so thoroughly Jewish that it seems evidently to have been written to Jewish Christians.

c. *The object* is to stand for the purity of the faith in Christ (1:3) for (1:4) certain persons had come into the church who were using the Christian freedom from the restrictions of the Mosaic law to live in licentious and evil ways. These persons were not only living evil lives, but were denouncing all rulers, both civil and ecclesiastical. Jude shows

that this is not Christian liberty but license, and productive of bad results; he declares that such sins will not go unpunished; that even as the angels (1:6) who left their first estate and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (1:7) received the due reward of their iniquity, so shall these persons be brought to judgment. He warns against sin and false teachers (1:18) and exhorts his hearers to keep themselves in the love of God, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (1:21).

QUESTIONS

Why are these epistles called General Epistles? What is their significance? Who were the writers? Who was the writer of James' Epistle; where was it written; what was the occasion and purpose? Who wrote the epistles of Peter? What is the subject of the first epistle; the second? Who wrote John's epistles? What was the occasion of writing the first epistle? What are the questions discussed? What are the second and third epistles? Who was the author of Jude's epistle; to whom written; the object?

XXIV

THE MESSAGE OF JOHN TO THE CHURCHES

Scripture: The book of Revelation

THE AGE AND THE AUTHOR

a. *The age.* In order to understand any book of the Bible we must know something of its setting or the times in which it saw the light. The book of Revelation, although placed last in the New Testament, was by no means the last written. This message was given to John in the Isle of Patmos about 68 A. D., in one of the most terrible periods of persecution and trouble that the churches have ever passed through.

On the night of July 18th, 64 A. D., a fire broke out in the city of Rome; it lasted for six days and six nights, spreading far and wide; at the end of this time it started anew in the northern part of the city and lasted for three days more; of the fourteen wards of the city ten were destroyed. The horror and terror of these days and nights is indescribable. The infamous Nero, the emperor, was accused of burning the city. In order to allay suspicion he charged the Christians with the crime and let loose the fury of the populace upon them. "The effect was fearful.

In the gardens of Nero, the present St. Peter's square, the Christians were crucified, sewn into hides of wild beasts and thrown to the dogs, and, enveloped in some inflammable stuff and raised on poles, they were used as torches." The great fire that had swept the city nearly out of existence, was but an excuse to begin a great persecution against the followers of Christ. Pity fled from the earth and cruelty took her place. The last days seemed to be at hand and horror followed upon horror. Although Nero died in 68 A. D., yet there were woes to come. Judea was revolting and the black shadow of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (predicted by Christ in Matthew 24) was being cast over the land. "The Devil, the beast and the false prophet were holding foul orgies in the streets of mystic Babylon (or Rome) red with the blood of the martyrs of the Lord; it was the time of earthquakes and inundations and volcanic outbursts and horrible prodigies . . . the sun of human life seemed to be setting amid seas of blood." Old societies and old systems were being destroyed, the new were coming to their birth. In the midst of woes past and woes to come in further bloody persecutions, the seer delivers his message and prophecies of the coming dawn.

b. *The author* is John, "the beloved apostle" of our Lord. He is last mentioned in Acts 15:4 (see in connection Gal. 2:9). He seems, after residing awhile at Jerusalem, to have gone to Ephesus; from which city he had direction over the affairs of the churches of Asia. From this city he was exiled to

the Isle of Patmos, during the time of persecution; after awhile he was able to return to Ephesus, where he lived until he died about 100 A. D. There is ample testimony to the fact of John's authorship of this Book of Revelation.

THE PURPOSE

It is well not to be too dogmatic about the purpose of any book of Scripture, but there is a purpose nevertheless: the task is to find it and make it clear. This is the only prophetic book in the New Testament and it contains things which cannot be readily explained; there are mysteries for which no solution has yet been found. These are in the details and it is not proposed in this short sketch to take them up; their treatment belongs to commentaries and special works.

But there is a great general purpose of this book which seems to be very plain: with that we have to do. This message of John certainly reflects the condition of the age in which it was written; its imagery and visions mirror the local conditions and hence some have declared it to be a book for its own age only. But Bible books differ from all other books in that local questions are decided by eternal principles and only take their starting-point from local conditions to reveal higher and grander truths; this constitutes their living power.

"Throughout the book there is from first to last the unfolding of one great thought, of one great principle of the Divine government of the church and the world."

a. *The message to the seven churches of Asia.*

They are addressed (1:4) and specially designated (ch. 2-3). They were situated between Rome and Jerusalem. As they had seen, under Nero, the horrors upon horrors which had taken place in the greatest city of the empire and were to see the awful tragedy of the destruction of the Holy City, no wonder their hearts were failing them for fear. The foundations of the earth and Heaven seemed to be giving away. Where was that glorious Kingdom of which they had been taught? Trumpets of disaster and trouble were being sounded on every side. Vials of wrath were being poured out. Where was God? Where was Christ? Did they not care? Was the glorious vision of righteousness to fade out and was iniquity to prevail? The whole Christian Church seemed doomed to destruction. Men's hearts were failing them for fear.

It is at this time that John, in banishment, writes "The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him." It shows how completely things are in God's hands (1:8). The Christians are shown the workings of God's providence; there is nothing but what He sees and knows; wickedness, although vaunting itself to heaven, shall be cast down to hell. The forces of evil are making war with the forces of the Lamb, but the Lamb will be victorious (17:14). God will prevail over all. Death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire (20:14). All evil men shall have their part in the second fearful death (21: 8). There shall be a new heaven and a new earth (21: 1). He that is faithful and overcom-

eth shall inherit all things (21: 7). There is the vision of a glorious city in which "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it" (ch. 21 and 21: 23).

Here is a message of cheer and encouragement for the churches. The storms of persecution might come, but God was watching and caring for His people. Evil should not, could not prevail; the victory was sure for righteousness. John had been shown the map of God's plans. The churches would not die, but would outlast all their present persecutors and awful persecutions.

All this brought wonderful hope and courage and cheer to the members of the early churches. They heard the great songs of victory in advance, and rejoiced even in present tribulations.

b. *The message to all churches.* There is in this book an element that is unexplainable by sole reference to the needs of the Asian churches: it has a larger scope and in a certain sense refers to all time. Storms of persecutions have swept (since the time of the Roman empire) and will yet sweep over the churches. But let none fear, God is watching; He is over all and cares for all. There shall come a *final* day of reckoning; a final judgment when all wickedness shall receive its just deserts and all righteousness its glorious reward.

ANALYSIS

a. *Introduction* (1). It is a message of grace and peace (1: 17). There is here a calm dignity

which shows a mastery of the situation (1). The churches are called by name as if to reassure them (1:11). The picture of Christ walking amid the seven golden candlesticks is magnificent (1:13; compare 1:20). Christ has the keys of "hell and of death" (1:18). He is the alpha and omega and has dominion and power.

When we take into consideration the times and circumstances in which these words were penned, they must have opened up a whole new world of comfort to the persecuted and perplexed Christians of that early age.

b. *The seven epistles to the seven churches of Asia* (2, 3), Ephesus (2:1-7), Smyrna (2:8-11), Pergamos (2:12-17), Thyatira (2:18-29), Sardis (3:1-6), Philadelphia (3:7-13), Laodicea (3:14-22). Each church has special words of disapproval or commendation according to its needs or opportunities; but the chief message is that of encouragement. The word "overcometh" is used seven times, or at the conclusion of the message to each church (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Our Lord Himself (2:1) dictates these epistles to John, and they are well worth careful study.

c. *The visions of prophecy* (4-22).

1. God is seen upon His throne (4:2, 3) and the Lamb in the midst of the throne (5:6). This vision (ch. 5, 6) remains constant throughout the book; it is obscured at times by the troubles and woes, but as the great mountain remains steadfast, although at times obscured and lost by clouds which gather about

it, so God on His throne is alone stable and unchanged. Here is the great consolation of the book. God can never be conquered by evil. He is over all, and every evil thing shall finally be put down by Him.

2. The vision of the opening of the seven seals (6:1-8).

3. The sounding of the seven trumpets (8:2-11:19).

4. The seven mystic figures (12:1-14:20).

5. The seven vials poured out (15:1-16:21).

6. The triumph of Christ (17:1-22:21). Babylon, which symbolized the world power of evil, falls (17:1-19:10). Satan, the hostile spiritual power, falls before Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords (19:11-21). The judgment (20). The final victory of Christ, the new heavens and the new earth (21:1-22:21).

INTERPRETATION AND TEACHING

a. *Interpretation.* Many have taken in hand to solve the mystery of this wonderful book, but much still remains unsolved. It has been declared by some that all the things spoken by John found their fulfillment in the first ages of the church. Others equally positive affirm that they are being gradually fulfilled or are wholly in the future. But under any school of interpretation the fact stands forth of the Christ triumphant over all opposition and bringing all things into subjection to Himself. The truth about this book seems to stand midway between those

who advocate that all these prophecies have been fulfilled, and that all are yet in the future. It is plain that John had reference to his own times, the near and the far distant future. He even did not tell all he heard and saw (10: 1-4). No event or series of events can exhaust the meaning of this book until the final overthrow of sin and Satan.

b. *Teaching.* God is over all. Satan (and all evil) is under His control; they are only allowed to go so far; they are held in check. Evil only apparently triumphs, the whole book is "a magnificent protest against this apparent triumph of evil." Men are deceived and lured to their destruction when they believe that the world, or sin, or Satan can conquer God, His church or His people. We find here "a hatred of sin, a conviction of righteousness and a strong persuasion, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, that there is a righteous Governor who will avenge His elect."

There is a dominant note of joy, a song of victory that breathes through the whole book; there is never a shadow of doubt as to the ability of God to care for His people. Sin is regarded as foolishness in the Bible, for there is never the slightest chance of its ultimate triumph.

This book is fittingly placed at the close of the New Testament. The whole Bible is the revealing of the Christ as the Redeemer and Savior of man from sin; seen dimly at first, He comes through prophet, priest and king; He appears on earth with His glory veiled in the flesh; He comes more and

more as history reveals Him. This book shows Him in His supreme glory as Lord of lords and King of kings.

QUESTIONS

What can be said of the times and author of the book of Revelation? The purpose; the message to the seven churches of Asia; to all churches. Into what three divisions may the book be divided? What can be said of the introduction; the seven epistles to the seven churches of Asia; the visions of prophecy? What can be said of the interpretation and teaching?

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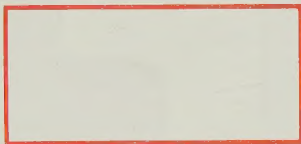
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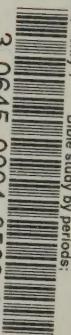
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